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(Mrs. Alice E. Haven)

(Mrs. Alice E. Haven)
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Respectfully -
Alice B. Neal.

THE

GOSSIP'S OF RIVERTOWN;

WITH

SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.

BY

ALICE B. NEAL.) Haven

SECOND EDITION.

PHILADELPHIA:

HAZARD AND MITCHELL,

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TO
THE MOTHER
OF
JOSEPH C. NEAL.

As Ruth, of old, wrought in her kinsman's field—
From the uneven stubble patiently
Gathering the corn full hands had lavish'd free,
Nor paused from sun, or air, her brow to shield—
So I have gleaned, where others boldly reap:
Their sickles flashing through the ripen'd grain,
Their voices swelling in a harvest strain,
Go on before me up the toilsome steep.
And thus I bind my sheaf at even-tide
For thee, my more than mother! and I come
Bearing my burden to the quiet home
Where thou didst welcome me, a timid bride;
Where now thy blessed presence, day by day,
Cheereth me onward in a lonely way.

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THE
GOSSIP'S OF RIVERTOWN;
OR,
LESSONS OF CHARITY.

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издано от звезда

THE GOSSIPS OF RIVERTOWN;

OR,

LESSONS OF CHARITY.

S K E T C H T H E F I R S T.

T H E N E I G H B O U R S .

CHAPTER I.

“ ‘T is an accident scarce worth repeating—

(But people, you know, dear, *will talk!*)

How is it you always are meeting

With some one you know, when you walk?”

Thank Heaven, *they* are not censorious! not at all of a suspicious turn of mind, not in the least disposed to be rashly credulous; but everybody *must admit*, that there cannot be so much smoke, without *some* flame.—*Laman Blanchard.*

T was very evident that Mrs. Harden expected company that afternoon. Miss Harriet had dusted the parlours herself. Mrs. Harden had been observed to give particular directions about cleaning the front hall, the bell knob and door-plate inclusive. If proof was wanted after all this—for it was not Saturday, when people are expected to “raise a dust”—Hannah, the girl, had said, while negotiating the loan of Mrs. Miller’s patty-pans, “They wanted twelve besides their own; for *Miss* Harden expected *Miss* Folger and her husband, *Miss* Utley and *her*, with all the children, to tea.”

"And children generally is fond of cakes," added Hannah; an axiom which Mrs. Miller—who was the fond mother of five responsibilities—did not attempt to dispute.

Two o'clock found Miss Harriet's hair released from curl papers; Mrs. Harden's best cap, the one with white satin rosettes, nicely arranged; and the two ladies descended to the parlour to wait in blank expectation the arrival of their visitors. Presently a rumble of wheels caused both to rush at once to the same window, to the threatened demolition of a carnation pink, and huge horse-shoe geranium there stationed.

"That's the cab!" said Miss Harriet.

"Well I declare! so it is," echoed mamma.

"But it is n't going to stop, after all."

"No! Well, it's too bad."

The cab *was* going to stop, however; the driver well knew what he was at, and with a grand sweep it turned a little above the house, and drew up in fine style to the curbstone.

There was Mrs. Folger, all smiles and exclamations, with Bobby, the youngest child, in her arms; and the cabman lifted Susan and Sarah Ann, the twins, out after her. There was also a huge bundle of work, and a covered basket, besides a shawl, lest it should be cold in the evening, and Bobby might need it. Herc, be it observed—*par parenthèse*—that the less ladies sew at home, the shorter the day; and the more children they have to look after, the greater the package of work they take when they go out to "spend the afternoon," in Yankee parlance. Mrs. Harden took the screaming juvenile, with a mighty effort, from its mother, and ushered maternity into the parlour with sundry declarations that—Mrs. Folger was the greatest stranger she knew of—(they did not see each other more than three times

in the week;) and Harriet seized in rapture upon the twins, protesting, as she undid their various wrappers, she *so doated* on children — they were *such* a treat at their house.

Here Mrs. Folger discovered that the cab had stopped at Mrs. Miller's, and while communicating the important fact, Mrs. Miller and baby ascended the steps, and away drove the clattering little vehicle.

"Well! if Mrs. Miller don't go *all* the time!" said Mrs. Harden. "What she pays that man for cab-hire, would keep a decent family in lights, the year round."

Mrs. Harden had very limited ideas on the subject of illuminations generally — so thought Hannah, and so hinted her husband; but "economy, after all, 's the main thing," as she so often said.

"Would Mrs. Folger sit up to the fire? perhaps her feet were damp?" suggested Miss Harriet. The walking was shocking, to be sure, and their visitor discovered that the toe of one of her slippers was quite wet; it must have been from crossing the pavement. "Perhaps she had better take the baby; he was apt to be troublesome." Mrs. Harden could not think of giving the dear little fellow up so soon; she had not held him more than a minute, and, as Harriet just said, children were such a treat to them.

Again, a rumble close to the pavement announced the arrival of the "carryall," and while Mrs. Utley and sons are being shown in, a word on cabs in general, this cab in particular. Perhaps some residents of the Quaker city still remember the hubbub among news-boys and corner-loungers, which the advent of cabs created. We have heard a description of the first ride which was daringly taken by two gentlemen friends, from the Exchange to

Fairmount. Stones were thrown — groans, hisses and derisive cheers followed their course — and happy were they at last to escape these demonstrations of the public's affectionate notice and regard. Scarcely less was the excitement, though it was of a different nature — when these most convenient vehicles made their first appearance in Rivertown.

Nobody had heard the thing proposed, when all at once Smith & Miller, of the great livery stable, came out with three of the neatest little affairs that ever were seen, and they became the rage directly. So cheap ! one could ride to any part of the town for sixpence ! Sixpences no longer lingered at the end of purses, the bottom of pockets. Young ladies now dispensed with overshoes, and kid slippers were sported without a reproach from careful mammas — “ If it rains, I ’ll send a cab for you. I ’ve just sent around for one ; I ’m going to the head of the street ; ” so the young lady glanced with an inconceivable degree of satisfaction at the neatly slipp'd foot, and mamma drove off to do her shopping. But an ebb came to the tide of popularity. Men of business found they could walk from “ the wharf to the depot,” almost as soon, and quite as cheaply, as they could ride ; and housekeepers could not afford it, while the help broke so many tumblers. Young ladies, aroused to arithmetical calculation, suddenly discovered that four sixpences made a quarter of a dollar, which would go some way towards the purchase of a new neck-ribbon. So, from being constantly in demand — a passenger became a *rara avis*, and at last two of the three were laid by, and “ the solitary survivor ” was employed mainly, as we have seen, in conveying married ladies and their little ones, “ out to spend the afternoon ; ” bringing Mrs. Folger and the children up street on a visit — Mrs. Miller down, when it returned, — and

again rolling northward with Mrs. Utley. See you not our moral, most philosophical reader? Public patronage is not a whit more stable now than when the populace in olden times shouted one day for their king—the next for his murderer and successor.

But to return to Mrs. Harden's parlour, which was so unceremoniously deserted. Mrs. Utley is by this time quite at home there—Bobby's mother is nicely warmed, and Bobby himself has gone tranquilly to sleep. Misses Susan and Sarah Ann are charitably furnishing employment for the man who tunes Miss Harriet's piano. Henry Utley is devoted to the kitten, and his baby brother sits on his mother's lap, resisting all Miss Harriet's entreaties to "Come, there's a darling" with slight kicks, and the exclamations "No, I wont—keep away!"

The ladies' knitting-work saw the light, and their tongues found motion, as a kind of running accompaniment to the sharp click which rose industriously above the din of the children.

Mrs. Folger thought it was a very open winter, and she "should n't be surprised if the river broke up next week."

Mrs. Utley was afraid not; her husband had said, at dinner, that they crossed with teams in the morning; the ice must be pretty sound yet. Harriet gave brother John's opinion that the channel would not be clear of ice before the first of April. Miss Harriet, be it observed, was one of those people who—perhaps it is that their words are often doubted—always give the best of references; pa, ma or John being made responsible for innumerable bits of gossip, that would doubtless have astonished these good people, had they reached their ears. Innumerable were the topics that received similar treatment—not to be hinted at, the many important secrets communicated with the preface of

"Don't mention it for the world, from me!" and interrupted by exclamations of "Do tell!" "No?" and the like. At length there was silence—comparative silence that is, for the children were as industrious as ever. Mrs. Harden stepped out a minute to tell Hannah, for the fortieth time, to be careful of the china, and as the door closed behind her, a bright face passed the window—and lo, another theme.

"If there isn't Mary Butler again!"—said one of the ladies, as the three looked after her retreating form.

"That girl's always in the street!"

"So John says!"

But horror for the moment suspended speech, and raised six hands simultaneously.

"Did you ever see the like?"

"She called him back, didn't she?"

"Yes, he had got to Stone's store."

"Well, I don't wonder he looks strange—just to see her shaking her finger at him, just as if she'd known him all her life, and to my certain knowledge, she never saw him before Mrs. Jackson's party; but when girls are in the street all the time, what can be expected?" Mrs. Folger drew a long sigh, and shook her head ominously.

Here Mrs. Harden returned, and was made acquainted with the important fact—all the witnesses speaking at once—that Mary Butler was going up street (for the third time this week, and it's only Wednesday)—and met Mr. Jorden just by the bank. He bowed very coldly (didn't he?) and was going on, when Mary Butler called him back, and they stood laughing and talking for as much as five minutes before she let him go. Miss Harriet, who had known him so long—a bowing acquaintance,

of a year's standing—wouldn't have dreamed of doing such a thing. Her mother hoped not—no, certainly, such an *imprudent* thing!

The gentlemen came in before the wonder had fairly subsided, and the interesting intelligence was duly reported. How provoking Mr. Folger was! He could not see anything at all remarkable in the affair; perhaps they were old friends! and Mr. Harden would insist that Mary Butler had an undoubted right to go up street as often as she chose. But men are always so queer—they never suspect! There was more going on than some people thought for; the ladies all agreed they should hear from that quarter again.

And so they did, for just as Hannah called them to tea, Harriet directed their attention to the window, with many a silent sign toward that corner of the room in which the gentlemen were discussing the projected river road; and there in the uncertain twilight of early spring, they saw—just as sure as you are reading this page—they saw Mary Butler going down street, and Mr. Jorden walking with her! Miss Harriet declared it was very hard to see why some people were so much in the street, in a manner that said as plainly as possible, that she thought it extremely lucid; and added that “she'd like to have brother John see *her* walking that way with Mr. Jorden,” intimating that if he did, it would be the last time she'd get out *that* winter!

Perhaps it is worth while to remark, that Mr. Jorden was one of the eligibles of Rivertown, and Mary Butler was a poor girl, with no income save that earned by a needle, which was probably the reason why it was so very improper, in the eyes of Miss Harriet, for her to be more than a speaking acquaintance to the “best match in town.” Miss Harriet, by the way, had often

been made happy for a week by a bow from him, and would have given her new gipsy-hat, plume and all, for a call from one so *distingué*.

Miss Harden just slipped in half a minute (*i. e.* half an hour) to see if her dear friend Adeline Mitchell was still alive—expressing her conclusion as she fondly embraced her, that she must not only be dead, but comfortably buried, as she had not seen her in an age, two days at least! Where had she kept herself?

A similar response from the lady *under* question, ended with the declaration, that she had been dying to see Harriet all day, and had expected her every moment. Why had n't she been in? —had she heard the news?

Miss Harriet *had* heard a great deal in the last twenty-four hours—she acknowledged that she had, but was not sure that this particular piece of intelligence was included. What was it about?

“Mary Butler and Mr. Jorden”—

Miss Harriet uttered something between a groan and a sigh; and by a peculiar motion of the head intimated that perhaps, she knew more about it than her friend.

“Go on!”

“Well, it's all over town”—continued Miss Mitchell. “Every body's talking about it. I took tea at Mrs. Smith's last night—(why was n't you there, Harriet) and two ladies (I won't mention names) said, that they had seen her out in the evening with him; though Miss Smith—you know they live right opposite—says he never goes into the house, but leaves her before

they get to the hotel. It was only night before last she had seen it happen, just in that way."

Miss Harden was not so much astonished at this intelligence as her friend intended, and evidently expected her to be; for with a low and impressive whisper, she assured the speaker that she had seen it with her own eyes.

"No! then that's four times they've been out together. Was there ever such imprudence?"

Miss Harriet returned home in the course of an hour, during which time it had been settled between the fair ladies, that Mary Butler ought to be ashamed of herself—that some one who knew her ought to speak to her about it, and advise her as a friend to cut Mr. Jorden henceforth and forever. Every one knew how wild he'd been! Thank Heaven, she was not among the list of *their* acquaintances. Brother John had said her name was brought up at the whist party at the hotel only last night; and when girls were discussed by a lot of young men in that way, there was no knowing *where* it would end: they should die—*positively* they would never hold up their heads again, if they thought *their* names had ever been thus profaned.

CHAPTER II.

"A whisperer separateth chief friends."

"Forgive me if I listened
To the tales which they have breathed;
It was sorrow more than anger—
I was wrong, my friend, deceived!"

MARY BUTLER tied on her neat little hood, and drew the thick Highland shawl more closely about her form. It was a happy face that the little mirror reflected, for content and high health spoke plainly in every feature, and in the soft bloom that mantled the dimpled cheek. And had she not reason to be happy? Since her father's death, had she not everywhere found kind friends? What good was there in dwelling on those brighter days—when she need not have touched her needle unless it so pleased her—when her mother was mistress of a luxurious home, in her far away native city—and where she, the darling, the light of the household, was petted and caressed by those who saw in the beautiful child but the future heiress of a proud fortune! Could dwelling on these careless happy days recall them? Pshaw! after all, they were not so happy—so she reasoned with herself—there were ever so many things to vex them; only one was then her guide whose face was now hidden—and then she would check the tears that rose with that dear remembrance, and think that his care still smoothed life's pathway, even though the blessed ministry was unseen. True, her mother and herself were now almost entirely dependent on their own industry—but if their income

was small, their wants were few, and Mary sang like a bird, “as the shining needle flew,” while her mother sat by, and silently blessed the daughter whose devotion and constant cheerfulness helped her to bear the bitter sorrow that sometimes clouded her pale face; for at times Mrs. Butler still dwelt upon the wealth and position that had made her youth a dream of delight, and that now was hers only in remembrance. She sighed,—when she fancied that her fair child was looked coldly upon—for the power that should of right have been hers; and when she dwelt on the plain neat dress which Mary ever wore, she contrasted it with rich fabrics that gave added beauty to her own early loveliness, forgetting that Mary had a charm over all this—“the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.”

In such hours of despondency, her daughter’s musical voice and cheerful smile alone could restore her to anything like hope. While thus fulfilling a saered duty, how could Mary be sad, or indulge in murmuring regrets! Besides, she had of late a new cause for happiness. A kind friend, who had been their guest in affluence, and who still loved them for themselves, had come to reside in Rivertown, and had opened a new souree of pleasure and hope. She remembered Mary’s early talent for music, and suggested that she could more pleasantly increase her income, as a music-teacher, kindly offering her own piano for practice, and her services as instructor: as Mrs. Jackson was an accomplished pianist, this was no little kindness. This, then, was the secret of her daily walk past the window of Miss Harriet, for Mrs. Jackson resided a few doors above, and her being out so often ceases, with us at least, to be a wonder.

“A quick step tells of a light heart,” says the old proverb; then surely no heart could have been lighter than Mary’s as she

commenced her walk ; but as she saw a group of young friends coming down the street, she slackened her pace that she might have a little chat with them. What was her astonishment when they passed with but a slight nod, leaving her to pursue her walk alone ! "It could not be intentional," was her second thought, and, quite undisturbed, she went on as gaily as before.

How strangely every one acted that afternoon ! Her friend Mrs. Jackson did not seem at all happy to see her ; but perhaps the troubles of house-cleaning had clouded her temper, and the lesson over, Mary was once more in the street.

All at once her face, thoughtful before, was lighted with a smile, as if she was about to meet some pleasant acquaintance ; but her cordial greeting received a very distant bow in return, and *Mr. Jorden* "passed by on the other side." It cannot be denied that her heart sank within her as she once more entered her home, and her mother missed her happy song, as she plied her needle in a sad silence through the whole of that long evening.

Day by day the change grew more marked. One friend after another looked coldly upon her, and though she had ever before watched with impatience the hour of her daily walk, she now almost dreaded to enter the street, lest she should be saddened by cold greetings and averted faces. Even Mrs. Jackson was strange in manner, and gave her lessons as if it were no longer a pleasure, but a hurried, disagreeable task. Suspense, a dread of some evil, we know not what—is often far worse than the evil itself; and it was with a desperate resolve, that Mary at last begged Mrs. Jackson to tell her how she had offended, and why her acquaintances were friends no longer. She had struggled against the depression of spirit which all this had caused, but in vain. Her

mother had noticed the listless despondency which seemed creeping over her, and she, too, had wept in solitude; not at the strange rumours that were circulating through Rivertown—for fortunately none had reached her ears, but she feared that constant exertion was wearing upon the health of her darling, and had dimmed the bright eye, and paled the rose-tint of her cheek.

Mary's sorrow was not lessened, when her friend bade her ask her own heart, if trust once betrayed should ever again be tried. But the tears of the young girl and her protestations of innocence at length convinced Mrs. Jackson that a guilty soul could not be looking from those pure eyes, and she drew the poor girl to her heart, and told her of the slanderous whispers that had little by little chilled her love and destroyed her confidence. She did not dare to tell her all, for she could not endure to sully the pure heart trusting her faith so fully, by even the shadow of those baser stories that had grown from the whispered comments upon her girlish vivacity; but Mary instantly felt the whole truth, and it was the first *searing* of her affectionate nature.

God forgive those, who, however indirectly, cause such pangs as came to her heart—earthly forbearance fails to pardon the transgressor.

"Knowing as I did"—continued her friend, "that you were aware, from the first, of my sister's engagement to Mr. Jorden, I wondered, when the report came to me, that you encouraged his attentions; I was told that you were seen walking with him very frequently; that you conversed in public with the greatest familiarity. Then it was that I began to watch every movement of you both, for my sister's happiness is dear to me as my own, and I knew she would be wretched if he proved false; and forgive me, Mary, that I at last gave credence to the tales that

almost daily came to my ears. I confess they did much to blind me, and at last, I fancied that I had discovered in him an undue interest for you. I mistook sincere and brotherly friendship for affection, and upbraided him for his falsehood. He left me in anger, indulging bitter feelings toward both you and myself. Shortly after you came in, for the first time I received you coldly. Since then I have fancied I saw a change in your manner towards me; that you hurried when you came to your lesson, as if anxious to go from my presence as soon as possible. Poor child! how I have wronged you!"

There was a slight movement in the little sitting-room, that adjoined the parlour, and the door which had been ajar, swung suddenly shut. Just then Mr. Jorden entered the room, and Mrs. Jackson, still with her arm about the blushing girl, begged forgiveness of them both. There was a hearty cordiality in the warm grasp of Mr. Jorden's hand, and Mrs Jackson's kiss was more affectionate than ever.

For the first time in many weeks, Mary Butler's heart was at rest; though, now and then, a sad recollection came to disturb the present joyousness; but her friends had promised to show the little world of Rivertown, that they discountenanced all the reports in circulation, and hereafter treat her, and love her as a sister, as some amend for the sorrow she had known through them. So she left them, while they were devising a scheme that should do this effectually, and passed Miss Harden near the door with a firm free step, conscious of innocence, and caring little for the proud sneer of that young lady; though she drew down her veil rather hastily, knowing that her eyes were still swollen with weeping, and not caring that Miss Harden should comment upon it.

CHAPTER III.

Said Sally, "my mistress and they had a time,
As sure as you're mixing that bread.
Miss Martha was mad, and Miss Ellen ran out,
And her eyes were all swollen and red."

Family Quarrels.

"I told you so!"—*Everybody's Comment on a Disclosure.*

 OOD gracious! Harriet, what *do* you think I've heard this afternoon?"

Mrs. Harden did not allow her daughter time to put off her bonnet and mantilla, (a velvet mantilla, one of the four in Rivertown,) before she accosted her with the above startling query. Miss Harriet could not pretend to guess; but she also had her own private astonishment, and she, too, could tell something if she chose.

"Why, what *do you mean?*!" ejaculated her mother. "Not more about Mary Butler?"

Miss Harriet gave a slight nod of assent.

"Well, if it doesn't beat all! I heard—that is, their Jane (Mrs. Jackson's Jane) just ran in to borrow our flat-irons, (seems to me that Jacksons have most enormous washes; that child has a clean white dress every morning, Jane says, and two bird's-eye aprons a day,) well, Jane just ran in a minute, and she told Hannah (Hannah saw that she was flustered about something), that they had just had an awful time at their house. Mrs. Jackson, it seems, has been giving Mary Butler music lessons."

"No! Now, ma, that accounts for what Adeline told me. I've just come from there, and she said, Mrs. Butler had hinted

to Mrs. Mason (you know they board there now), that Mary wasn't going to sew so steady after April, and asked who Ann Maria took lessons of—and how much Mr. Broadbent charged a quarter. We thought something must be going on, but we couldn't understand it. Now, it's as clear as daylight. Mary Butler must be thinking that Mr. Jorden's going to be such a fool as to marry her, and she's preparing to set up for a great lady. Mary Butler going to take lessons of Mr. Broadbent, indeed! when pa says he can't afford to let me! I wonder how she thinks she's going to pay him. Make his—”

But here mother could keep silence no longer; her information was too important to be neglected; it had been received by express, and she expected her bulletin-board would be surrounded by an astonished crowd.

“I've no patience with that girl”—broke in Mrs. Harden. “What d'ye think? As I was saying, Mrs. Jackson was giving her music lessons. Of course, Mary Butler having nothing to do, can find plenty of time to practise!”—(Mrs. Harden evidently intended this to be ironical)—“and somehow, Mrs. Jackson heard about Mary Butler's goings on with Mr. Jorden. How she heard I'm sure I can't tell, but it seems to be all over town. I havn't mentioned it to more than two or three, and I guess we saw about as much of it as any one.”

Mrs. Harden was right there, at least. “Why, don't you know, ma, I told you long ago that John heard it talked about at the hotel, and that Adeline was taking tea at Mrs. Smith's, weeks ago, and they knew all about it. Mrs. Utley and Mrs. Folger were there. It was the night after you had company, in March, I guess it was.”

“Well, however she heard of it, Mrs. Jackson's not the woman

to let such things go unnoticed. I think Jane must be excellent help—she runs in quite often to see Hannah. Now, Martha never was in our kitchen once, all the while she stayed there. We never would have known anything from *her*. How long has Jane been at Mrs. Jackson's?"

"About three weeks—do go on, ma; I'm dying to tell you something."

"As I was saying, Mrs. Jackson of course would not countenance such behaviour; so she bore it as long as she could—though she didn't treat Mary Butler half so well as she used to. I always did wonder what she found in her to like, and at last this very afternoon she out with it."

"Why, ma—there, *now* I know!" Miss Harriet's face brightened as if she had found the solution of some great enigma. Sir Isaac himself could not have seemed more delighted when that apple acted as a key to nature's mystery—the philosopher of still more ancient times did not cry "Eureka," in more joyous tones.

"What d'ye know, Harriet?—just wait a minute, though, till I get through my story. Mrs. Jaekson told her every word, and Mary Butler cried like everything. According to all accounts," (*i. e.* Jane's and Hannah's,) "they had an awful time. Jane was in the sitting-room taking care of little Archie, and they were in the parlour. She did not hear all they said, for they talked quite low part of the time; but Mrs. Jackson asked Mary Butler how she could have the face to pretend being ignorant of these stories—and told her she had 'encouraged Mr. Jorden's attentions'—these were the very words. Mary Butler cried like a baby, Jane says, and to cap the whole, Mr. Jorden walked right in in the middle of it. (Don't you think it was strange he

should go to Mrs. Jackson's without ringing? Jane says he often does; I suppose he must be quite intimate there.”)

“What did he say?”

“Why Jane didn't hear the rest. The sitting-room door fell to, and she didn't dare to open it, though she wanted to dreadfully. I'd like to know how it all ended. Jane thinks she heard Mrs. Jackson tell her not to enter her doors again;” (oh, Jane, what a fabrication!) “and I shouldn't wonder if she did—such impudence!” And Mrs. Harden fell back in her rocking-chair, quite overcome with the excitement of the narrative—but started up again as Harriet slowly and solemnly said,—

“Well, I can tell you more about that business.”

Mrs. Harden's emotions were of a mingled nature. Curiosity to hear the rest—vexation that she was not the sole possessor of this important piece of intelligence.

“I always told you,” added Miss Harriet, “that we should hear more from that quarter. I knew Mary Butler was an artful creature as ever lived! I was coming by Mrs. Jackson's on my way home from Adeline's, and just as I got by the parlour window, I *happened* to look up. There was Mrs. Jackson standing by the piano, (the shades were both drawn up,) and Mr. Jorden was on the other side turning over a music-book. Mr. Jorden was pale as death—(a slight embroidery, Miss Harriet,)—and Mrs. Jackson seemed to be very angry about something. At that very minute I heard the front door open—and out came Mary Butler. Her eyes were red as that curtain, and she pulled down her veil just as soon as she saw me. I don't wonder at it, Mr. Jorden's being angry—to think she should dare to dream of *his* marrying her.”

Miss Harriet was quite indignant. Had she not a right to be?

Mr. Jorden had never paid her the least attention—in fact, she was beginning to wonder if any one ever would, with seriousness. Miss Harriet was verging towards—but we forget—a lady's age is a subject not to be treated of with impunity. Mrs. Harden went into the kitchen under pretence of seeing when tea would be ready, but in reality to tell Hannah the confirmation of Jane's wondrous tale; and her daughter slipped on her bonnet again, and wrapping her mother's blanket shawl about her, “ran over” to Adeline's a minute, to enjoy her surprise at what she had to tell. That industrious young lady was making over her stone-coloured merino dress, preparatory to a visit in the country; (remember, dear reader, Rivertown was *almost* a city, and numbered some five thousand inhabitants;) but she paused in her avocation, and was quite as much overcome as Harriet had expected her to be—so much so, that the dress was put by for the night; and the moment Harriet had fairly got round the corner on her way home, Miss Adeline donned hood and cloak, and set out for Mrs. Smith's to enlighten her upon the terrible *denouement* at Mrs. Jackson's. Mrs. Smith was the gossip, *par excellence*, of Rivertown, and the reader may naturally conclude, that before bed-time half the inhabitants of the place knew all about the “strange thing that happened at Mrs. Jackson's that afternoon.” Mrs. Smith's were not the only hood and over-shoes that were put in requisition that memorable evening, and all agreed Mary Butler was served right for flirting with Mr. Jorden.

“I should not wonder if he told her to her face that she was a presuming piece,” said one. “Nor I,” said a second. Whereupon, the story gathered as it rolled, until John Harden heard, at the hotel, the very next evening, that Mrs. Jackson had turned Mary Butler out of her house, and Mr. Jorden had accused her

to her face of "trying to get him," adding that "she had reckoned without her host." All the young men declared it was a perfect shame, for Mary Butler was the handsomest girl in town, and that was why all the girls were tattling about her. For their parts, they thought she was worth a dozen of some they could name; and if "Jorden" had talked so to her, he deserved a horse-whipping. "He shall get it, too," muttered Mr. Hoffman, a young lawyer, as he strode from the room.

CHAPTER IV.

"'Twas plain to every observer's eye,
That party spirit was running high,
And this was the popular party."



F Mrs. Harden was nearly overcome with the Jackson affair, imagine the state of her mind when, not two weeks after, it was rumoured that Mr. Jorden was going to be married—and to whom, of all people, but Mrs Jackson's sister.

Yes, Mrs. Smith must remember her—that tall girl that always wore such low-necked dresses, and, positively, she'd been seen sitting at the window in short sleeves! when she was up from New York last summer. To be sure, if Harriet had done a thing of the kind, all Rivertown would have been in arms about it—but it was *Mrs. Jackson's sister*, and that was enough to make anything go down with the young men. The fact was, if Mrs. Jackson had been some people's wife, they'd look out after her a little closer; she had such girlish ways. But it wasn't her (Mrs.

Harden's) business—and perhaps it was well for the poor little lady that it was not.

Yes, Mr. Jorden was going to be married, and to a city girl—that was unpardonable. Why couldn't people be content with those they'd known for years and years—been brought up with, as one might say. As if Rivertown girls were not good enough for any body, and quite *genteel* enough, too. What was more, Mrs. Jackson was going to give a grand party in honour of the bride, such a party as Rivertown had never seen. Invitations were to be issued a week beforehand, and a large party of New York people were coming up on purpose to be there. Mr. Jorden's brother was to be groomsman, coming all the way from Baltimore—for he had been adopted by his uncle, Livingstone Carroll, when he was quite a lad, and Mrs. Harden had almost forgotten how he looked. Jane—that girl was invaluable to Mrs. Jackson; so said her neighbours, and who had a better right to know about Mrs. Jackson's domestics?—Jane said the cake was to come from New York, too, and—but Mrs. Harden wouldn't pretend to tell half she heard about it. Didn't Mrs. Smith think Mary Butler'd feel well now? If she'd only behaved herself, she might at least have had an invitation to the party, and that was something, at all events, considering these gentlemen were coming from New York. Mrs. Harden wondered if Harriet would be asked. Oh, of course, though, being that they were such near neighbours.

All this was imparted to Mrs. Smith during the few minutes that they stood in Vandeuisen's store, Mrs. Smith waiting for Adeline Mitchell, who had promised to drop in and help her choose a new *mousseline de laine*—(Vandeuisen's *mousseline de laines* were so cheap—only three shillings—all wool, too—posi-

tively they were almost as nice as Mrs. Utley's cashmere that she gave seventy-five cents for in New York, last fall.) Mrs. Harden had been *looking at* some sheeting — she thought thirteen cents was rather high for bleached sheeting ; but, however, she'd look a little further, and call again if she did not find any that would do better.

We pass over the intervening two weeks, in which Mrs. Jackson's party was the principal topic of discussion, with one diverging exception. Mary Butler left town a week before the bride was expected—just about the time they were to be married—and no one could tell where she had gone, or for what purpose. Her mother was resolutely silent upon the subject, and the general conclusion was that she was on a visit to some country friend, to keep out of the way of the Jorden party. No wonder, said everybody, that she wanted to be away from Rivertown just then.

The bridal party came in the morning boat, almost the first boat of the season—and, wonder of wonders ! no one could understand it, Mary Butler was with them ! So said John Harden, and John was on the dock. He saw her get into a carriage and drive up with the Jacksons. He was sure it was Mary Butler, for he knew her step so well, though she kept her veil down all the while. Harriet thought John must be crazy—in fact, she hinted that perhaps he was not quite wide awake. *She* was looking out of the window—she happened to be there by accident —when the carriage came. There was Mr. and Mrs. Jackson—the bride—at least it must have been, for she had on a *magnificent* embroidered merino—Mr. Jorden, (how queer he did look !) and one lady besides, who was very much smaller than Mary Butler, and had such a beautiful little hand ! Mary Butler never saw the day when she could wear so small a glove as the stranger

wore. The next carriage-load were all new faces—one of the gentlemen had such *magnificent* moustaches, and the lady *he* was so attentive to, wore a plaid travelling dress and dark-brown gaiters. Mary Butler, indeed! She was miles away; and it served her right, too, the forward chit!

John was not yet convinced; he knew that his sister had good eyes—very sharp eyes, he might say—(“Why, John, you good-for-nothing fellow!” broke in the amiable young lady in question)—but that *was* Mary Butler, and she might see for herself to-night, for of course she’d be at the party if it was.

At eight—for Rivertown people thought that hour the extreme of fashion—there was a goodly throng of guests assembled in the pretty parlours of Mrs. Jackson. Mrs. Harden was there, in the glory of a new black silk. Miss Harriet was irresistible in pure white, with a pink sash and bows down the skirt; her hair dressed after the pattern of the tallest figure in the last *Lady’s Book* fashion plate. If it did not look well, it was not Adeline Mitchell’s fault: they did each other’s curls always, and as Adeline had no invitation for this particular evening, she had exhausted two full hours and all her ingenuity, to do her friend’s hair in the broadest, finest plaits that Rivertown was ever surprised with. Mrs. Folger and Mrs. Utley, though they had not expected to go, for they were little known in Mrs. Jackson’s circle, were astonished at receiving cards, with a particular request in Mrs. Jackson’s own handwriting, that they would not fail to be there. This they could not account for; the same note was appended to the card received by the Harden family, and a few others of their acquaintance; and Harriet had boasted not a little at the circumstance, from which she drew the inference that Mrs. Jackson wished her sister to be very intimate with them. This was told

more than once, and at last became—"Mrs. Jackson said positively she should be very much hurt if we did n't come, being old neighbours so long."

The bride had not yet made her appearance, but the New York strangers were there; and Harriet was made inconceivably happy by Mrs. Jackson's introduction to the gentleman with moustaches, who began a most entertaining conversation. Mrs. Harden nodded and smiled at Mrs. Utley in delight; Harriet had doubtless made a conquest. Just at that moment, the bride and her attendants entered, and both mother and daughter stifled a scream of anger and amazement. Mary Butler—beautiful, *so* beautiful, in her satin dress, with tunics of delicate *tulle*—was the *first bridesmaid!*

Ah! there could be no mistake now. And if any there were, it had been quickly dispelled, for Harriet's companion, Mr. Costar, began most earnestly to praise Miss Butler, presuming that she was a friend of Miss Harden's. Poor Harriet, obliged to sit there and listen to the recital of Mary Butler's triumphs, how much she had been admired in the city, how every one had regretted her stay had been so short!

"You have such a treasure in her," said Mr. Costar; "I almost envy your delightful little town that one possession. She must be universally beloved, though, now I think of it, I recollect something Jorden told me of malicious stories got up by a set of disappointed old maids, or some people of that sort. Ah, yes," he continued, unconsciously, "that was the reason my little cousin was so particular that she should be first bridesmaid. I remember that Miss Butler would not listen to it at first. I wonder if any of those people are here to-night? Do you know any thing about it?"

Mr. Costar knew not that each word was a dagger to his listener. He had been told by his hostess to be very attentive to Miss Harden, and was so, because it was Mrs. Jackson's request. As her mother came rushing across the room to her, he politely resigned his seat, and left them to console each other in their mortification. They understood the particular invitation now. They began to have a glimmering of the truth. And was it not punishment enough to see Mary Butler moving as among her equals, admired by the strangers, and noticed by the *elite* of Rivertown, who now sought one before unnoticed, because others did so? And she, not seeming to know any thing of this strange by-play, moved gracefully and gently among the guests, bearing her honours, or rather her deserved praises, most meekly.

SKETCH THE SECOND.

MORE OF MARY BUTLER.

CHAPTER I.

"Where did I leave off? Oh—"—WIDOW BEDOTT.

ITTLE occurred to disturb the tranquillity of Rivertown for some time after Mrs. Jorden, "the bride," as she was called for six months at least, was fairly settled in her comfortable new house.

Miss Adeline Mitchell lived exactly opposite, and during the cleaning, moving, etc., her mind and heart had been completely

occupied. Now and then Harriet Harden relieved her from her arduous post behind the second story window blind, and the two together could tell you any article of furniture that the Jordens possessed. John Harden vowed he believed they knew how many pails of water had been carried in from the street pump, and the exact quantity of lime that had been used in white-washing. But Adeline said this was only because she happened to mention before him that there were two solar lamps, one for each parlour, and a mahogany bedstead in each of the front chambers. She did wonder, and she could not help it, why they wanted two washstands in the same room; she was sure there were no less than three marble-topped washstands in that house, besides four maple ones. The very "hired girl" had a new wash-bowl and pitcher.

She did not know what others might think, but for her part, as Mrs. Harden said, "easy come, easy goes," and she guessed Henry Jorden would learn to know the value of money one of these days, now that he'd got a wife that could help him spend it. She actually was going to keep two servants, a woman, and a little girl to run of errands, besides the man who took care of the horse and brought the water, and all that.

It was worse still when it was duly announced, by observant neighbours, that they had *two* horses, and Mr. Jorden had ordered a *magnificent new carriage* at Delamarten's, which magnificent establishment would have passed in New York for a plain, light family vehicle, and would have excited no attention whatever. Yet not once was it seen in the streets of Rivertown but clerks hastened to store-doors, milliners' apprentices dropped straw and silks to run to the "front shop," and servant-girls ran to call their mistresses, bidding them hurry as they came, "or it would

get by." Everywhere windows flew up, and blinds flew open; it was almost as much of an excitement as when "Dickens" passed through Main street the summer before. Every traveller who arrived at the Rivertown House for months afterwards, that was so unfortunate as to wear a linen blouse, and have an uncommon quantity of long, light hair, was surely "Dickens himself, again;" and so any strange vehicle, of whatever description, that could boast of four wheels and a covered top, was at some period and by some persons, taken for the new carriage, and criticised and depreciated as such.

Gradually the fever of curiosity came to a crisis, it passed, and in the languor that succeeded the dearth of incident was unrelieved for weeks. But after the catalogue of Mrs. Jorden's furniture and wardrobe had been duly committed to memory, Mary Butler and her mother were once more taken under consideration. Mr. Jackson had interested himself very much in their behalf, and through his generous exertions they had gained a tiresome law-suit, and found themselves once more possessed of a small, but, for them, sufficient competency. Mary Butler had her own piano now, and her little parlour was as fairy-like a *boudoir* as one could wish to see. They had rented a cottage that stood back from one of the principal streets, with a closely shaven lawn in front, bordered by flowering shrubs of every description. A grape-vine clung with its sweeping foliage to the trellis that extended the length of the house, and here Mary was as happy as a bird with her books, her flowers, and her piano. She did no discredit to her teacher, and often, in the evening, her clear voice came ringing through the foliage, arresting the passer-by with its wild melody, until quite a little audience gathered under the elm-trees; and the murmurs of applause, if not as loud,

were certainly as sincere, as those which greet a favourite prima donna on her benefit night.

Even Miss Adeline Mitchell had condescended to call upon her, introduced by Harriet Harden, who had claimed acquaintanceship since the night of Mrs. Jackson's party. Mary could not treat them unkindly, for as the memory of her sorrow faded in the present sunshine of happiness, she grew more and more lenient towards those who had been its cause. With a genuine spirit of Christian forgiveness, she pardoned "those who had trespassed against her," and strove to find palliating circumstances, for what her mother termed "heartless slander," when the tale at last reached her ears.

CHAPTER II.

"Seeing is believing."—OLD PROVERB.

MRS. SMITH had just come in from the kitchen to see how Miss Martin, the dressmaker, progressed in her task of making "auld claihs look amaist as weel as new." It was considered unpardonable extravagance in Rivertown, to hire a seamstress for plain-sewing; and three tailoresses, four dressmakers, and one widow lady, who was handy at everything, circulated at intervals among the better class of families, their semi-annual visits being regarded as quite delightful by the mistress of the house, for gossip was then the order of the day. Miss Martin was a universal favourite in the Harden and Smith clique, for she also sewed for the Jacksons, the Barnards, and the Millers, people

of whom they saw very little, except in the street or at church. Miss Martin could tell you all about Miss Barnard's New York lover; she thoroughly understood the domestic economy of the Millers, and did not hesitate to say that Mrs. Jackson had her own way completely, and as for her husband, it was too bad for a man like him to have to put up with everything as he did.

This particular morning the conversation turned upon Mrs. Jorden, and as Miss Martin had been employed by that lady for a day or two previous, there was much to be said, and a variety of questions asked. It was at length settled by Miss Martin's testimony, that the back parlour curtains were worsted damask instead of silk; that Mrs. Jorden always wore a cap at breakfast, and never came to dinner in her morning dress—("such airs!" exclaimed Mrs. Smith,) — that Mr. Jorden often passed whole evenings out of the house—and here Miss Martin became quite mysterious, and could not be prevailed upon to give any information with regard to the employment of said evenings.

"He haint joined the Odd Fellows?" said Mrs. Smith, throwing up both hands.

"No," was the concise reply.

"You don't say he goes to that shocking ten-pin alley?"

"Not that ever I *heard of*," vouchsafed Miss Martin; and then, urged by her listener, she at length disclosed that she believed quite too much of his time was passed at Mary Butler's.

"Of all things!" exclaimed Mrs. Smith rocking back energetically upon the kitten's tail, who sent forth a piteous yell as the door opened to admit Adeline Mitchell. "Oh, Adeline, I'm so glad to see you," was the greeting. "What *do* you think Miss Martin says? Mr. Jorden is absolutely half his time at Mary Butler's."

"Perhaps not *quite* half," mildly interposed the informant; "and if you'll never tell—but no, I've no right to mention such things," and Miss Martin industriously waxed a needleful of silk.

"Ah, come, go on, we'll never mention it, you may depend," said Adeline Mitchell, with breathless eagerness.

"Positively?"

"Never—that is, only to Harriet Harden; you'll let me tell her, won't you; but it sha'n't go a step further."

"Well, then—but I guess I'd better not, after all."

"Oh, do now."

"I've seen him give her letters, and she'd blush terribly, and hide them in her pocket as quick as thought. Then he always calls her 'Mary,' which is quite too familiar to suit me, and worse than all, Mrs. Jorden's found it out."

"You don't say so!"

"What *did* she do?"

"It was only last night—(now if you ever whisper this, I shall never forgive you.) I'll tell you how I happened to hear it. I was sewing in the dining-room, (as *she will* call it; *I* should say sitting-room,) and as I'd got the sleeves basted in and the hooks and eyes on, I thought I'd get her to try on the waist, so I just stepped to the back parlour door, but as I got there I stopped a minute, for I thought I heard high words, and the first I heard was—'You spend quite too much of your time at Mrs. Butler's, and I won't allow it any more!—then he said something I could not quite understand, and she answered 'No, I'm not naturally inclined to be jealous; but I shall put a stop to this, I assure you.' Then they talked lower, and so I just walked in, quite unconcerned, and there they stood by the fire-place. Just as I

opened the door, he tried to put his arm round her waist, to make up, I suppose, and she pushed it away—there, like that,” and Miss Martin, suiting the action to the word, gave Miss Adeline a somewhat ungentele repulse.

“ Well, I always said, from the first, there was no good in their acquaintance. You remember what a time Mrs. Jackson made a year ago about it?” said Mrs. Smith, appealing to Adeline Mitchell.

“ Don’t I though—if they *did* pretend to be such good friends afterwards? I’ve always thought the Jacksons took her up because she happened to get a little money about that time. To be sure, she runs there now every day of her life; but I’ll warrant Mrs. Jackson would like to put a stop to it if she could.”

Suddenly, Miss Mitchell recollected that she had promised to run in and see Harriet a little while that morning.

“ Oh, stay to dinner,” said Mrs. Smith, “ and we can talk it all over. I’m most through in the kitchen, and then I’m going to cover cord for Miss Martin; I’ve got nothing in the world to do.”

But Miss Adeline was already tying on her bonnet.

“ We’re going to have pot-pie,” urged her hostess.

“ And apple-dumplings,” suggested Miss Martin, whose choice in dessert had just been consulted.

But the love of gossip prevailed over that of apple-dumplings, and Miss Mitchell disappeared just as Mrs. Smith was summoned to the kitchen by the hired girl’s announcement that “ the crust was riz.”

Mrs. Harden and Harriet were hastily informed of all that had occurred; Miss Martin’s relation having received this embellishment, that Mrs. Jorden had said—“ though not naturally

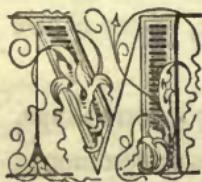
jealous, she could not help being so now, and she'd put a stop to all such proceedings at once." Nor did the ladies separate until the younger ones had made an engagement to call on Mary Butler the very next morning and judge for themselves. Scarcely had Adeline departed, before Mrs. Harden recollects that *she* had not promised secrecy, it having been exacted only of Harriet; and as dinner was over, and the pudding baking nicely, she might as well run into Mrs. Van Deusin's an instant. Before night, half Rivertown pitied "poor Mrs. Jorden," and blamed her husband and Mary Butler.

CHAPTER III.

*My friends—at least I call them so—
They always seem to be,
Most kind, most civil, so polite,
Whene'er they visit me."*

"Who could have believed it?"

COMMON EXCLAMATION.

MARY BUTLER was resolutely practising one of Herz's most brilliant variations when the threatened visit was paid. She did not feel quite at ease as the ladies entered, for she had never liked them, and there was an air of remarkable warmth in their salutations that disconcerted her. However, she tried to conceal her vexation, and kindly entered into the brisk conversation which they at once commenced.

The magazines with which the centre-table was strewn, served

to commence a discussion on the relative merits of their fashion-plates, and Mary was not a little amused at their decision in favor of that which displayed the most ungraceful figures. From fashions to Miss Martin was an easy transition—"Did Miss Butler ever employ her?"

Mary smiled a little as she replied that, from motives both of taste and economy, she had always chosen to make her own dresses.

The young ladies exchanged glances at this open confession, and Miss Mitchell asked if she had never met Miss Martin at Mrs. Jorden's. Yes, Miss Butler remembered having seen her there two or three days before; she recollects it perfectly, for Mr. Jorden was to have come in that evening, and practised a new duet, but something had prevented.

A second fire of glances was here exchanged, and the young ladies looked back at Mary to see if she was not confused. But strange to say, there was no sign of embarrassment upon her face. Yet she did not seem at ease after all, for she started every time the garden gate opened; they noticed that particularly; and once she went to the window, but it was only the boy from a neighbouring grocery store, with his basket of brown paper parcels.

Conversation languished. Adeline waited for her friend to give the signal for the termination of their call. But no—that young lady was determined to know more of the matter which had occupied her thoughts for the past twenty-four hours. So she recommenced the discussion before alluded to, calling Adeline's attention to a new style of mantilla which had before escaped their observation. Just at this juncture a loud knock—few Rivertown houses can boast of bells—startled them all, and

much to the astonishment of her visitors, Mary ran to the street door herself.

They had scarcely time to make a whispered comment, when she re-entered the room with a small parcel in her hand, looking very much flushed and excited, and bade the messenger wait until she saw whether an answer was required. A triumphant glance from Harriet directed Miss Mitchell's attention to the person of Mrs. Jorden's man-servant, who stood leaning against the hall-door, and back again to the deep blush, yes, an unmistakeable blush, that rose to Mary Butler's forehead as she perused the note that accompanied the parcel. Then she tore off the envelope, displaying — could they believe the evidence of their own senses! — a miniature case!

At first she seemed quite to have forgotten their presence, but as she gave one hurried glance at its contents she recalled herself, and begging them to excuse her absence a moment, left the room to write a note of reply. The miniature she evidently forgot in her haste, and it was left lying upon the table in dangerous proximity to Miss Harriet, with the note carelessly beside it.

Miss Harden directed a half-guilty, half-curious look towards her friend; a similar glance responded. But no—they could not so fairly sin against good-breeding, even with such a stimulus; and Adeline Mitchell began turning over the music upon the piano. A new waltz was lying upon the rack, and she ran her fingers over the keys to try it. She really possessed some little musical skill, and becoming interested in the beautiful melody, did not look up until the re-entrance of Mary Butler. As she turned, she noticed that Harriet seemed deeply absorbed in a book she had opened, and that she started with a heightened colour as Mary Butler made an apology for keeping them waiting so long.

Moreover, she did not quite understand why she rose in such haste directly after, and declared she had forgotten an engagement to shop with her mother that morning. As they closed the garden gate, on leaving the house, Harriet called her attention to the parlour window, and she distinctly saw Mary Butler press the miniature to her lips as she took it from its resting-place.

"Do you know whose miniature that is?" were the first agitated words as they regained the street.

"I have n't the slightest idea. I wonder how Mr. Jorden came to send it to her."

"Oh, well,—Adeline Mitchell,—as sure as you're walking Main street, it was Henry Jorden himself!"

Her companion absolutely turned pale. Even *she* could not believe so entire a confirmation of their worst suspicions.

"But, Harriet," she faltered, "you did n't dare"—

"Yes, but I did; it was lying right before me on the centre table—anything there is always public property—and what's more, the note was half open, and I couldn't resist the opportunity to read just a line. Now if you ever tell, I'll never speak to you again as long as I live."

"Well, I won't—I won't. Mercy, I never should have"—

"Yes you would, though, if you had sat where I did. I couldn't help reading the first line and then I went on a little further—I heard her coming before I got near through. I didn't touch it at all, so it's not so very bad. It was more than half open, and I poked it with my pencil a little nearer."

"What *was* it about?"

"What do you suppose a man would write when he sends a lady his miniature? It was all love from beginning to end, and I'd swear to the handwriting and signature any day. I remem-

ber every word I read—let me think—it began ‘Dear Mary,’ and then there was something about ‘as the original couldn’t be always near her, he sent the copy as soon as it came from New York’—(it seems it was painted there)—‘and hoped it would prove a substitute until the original *was* always by her, to ‘give her that love which the picture, faithful as it was, could not bestow.’ These were the very words; I did not see how it ended, but I read his name signed in full at the bottom of the page, just as I heard her step.”

“I can’t believe you, Harriet.”

“I can’t believe my own eyes yet; but I tell you the *living* truth. What will ma say? such bold-faced, shameless conduct”—(Miss Harriet was not alluding to her own, dear ladies)—“I never heard of before. I think Mrs. Jorden ought to know it.”

At this crisis they were interrupted by “ma” herself, who was “cheapening” a piece of bleached muslin at the front counter of Gurnsey & Yerry’s, and called to them as they passed. After a wonder at the length of their visit, and a promise to the polite shopman that she would call some other day, (an indefinite pro-missory note which he well understood, as meaning his goods were too high, and she would go where they could be purchased cheaper,) the happy trio proceeded down the street.

Harriet’s information produced an effect even greater than she had anticipated. Mrs. Harden was absolutely horror struck! She protested such things should not be allowed in a Christian community; that every woman in Rivertown ought to set her face against such a bold piece as Mary; and, for her part, Harriet was forbidden, from that day, to darken Mrs. Butler’s door.

CHAPTER IV.

Said Mrs. Flynn to Mrs. Sweet,
‘*I wash my hands of the élite!*’
Said Mrs. Sweet to Mrs. Flynn,
‘*I wish we never had gone in!*’

BAYLY.

“Husband and wife need not a go-between.
I did not say I lived unhappily.”

BOKER'S CALAYNOS.



MISS MARTIN'S engagement at Mrs. Smith's ended the second day after her suspicions had been confirmed by the testimony of Harriet Harden.

She did not give expression to her thoughts upon the occasion, except by mysterious nods and winks, that said as plainly as gestures have ever been known to speak—“*I told you so!*” From that time there was a strangely triumphant expression in her glittering grey eyes, and a peculiar withered smile hung perpetually about her lips. Miss Margaret Martin was a maiden lady of thirty-nine. She was, as our readers may have seen, a perfect Athenian so far as regards a propensity for “hearing and telling some new thing,” and her peculiar mode of life did not tend to lessen this natural disposition.

From Mrs. Smith's her needle-book and scissors were in requisition at Mrs. Miller's, of whom we have before spoken, and who was on intimate terms with Mrs. Jorden. It is not to be supposed that so grand, so peculiar a bit of gossip was long with-

held from that lady's ears. Of her own part in the discovery, Miss Margaret said not a word, but while commiserating poor Mrs. Jorden, she most innocently wondered who *could have* started such a story? The way she heard of it was this:—Two young ladies (she couldn't mention names), had been paying a call on Mary Butler, and were surprised to find Mr. Jorden's miniature on her centre-table. They thought nothing of it, of course, (it might have been left there by Mrs. Jorden herself,) but when they were coming out they stopped to fasten the garden-gate, and looking back accidentally, they distinctly saw Mary Butler kiss the very miniature as she stood by the window! Then it was afterwards discovered that he, Mr. Jorden, was in the habit of writing to her two or three times a week, and one of the letters, by the merest accident, had been found, and was full of the most love-like expressions. Moreover, she herself chanced to know that Mr. Jorden frequently passed the evening there, and sometimes without his wife. Miss Margaret had seen him going in once alone; she remembered it distinctly, because it was the night of the terrible high wind that blew down Sprague & Skinner's new sign. She thought it was strange then that Mrs. Jorden should not have been with him—did Mrs. Miller recollect that terrible stormy night?

Mrs. Miller had not forgotten the evening in question, and she smiled as she thought his being out alone was *not* strange that night at least.

"To be sure," continued Miss Martin, (calling Mrs. Miller's little girl at the same time, to come and have a waist-lining tried on,) "to be sure, Miss Barnard says they practise together; that Mrs. Jorden hates music, and he's all bound up in it, so he goes over and takes his flute. But to my mind it's as clear as day-

light, that it's only an excuse. I declare, I can hardly keep still when I think how that girl goes on, and——”

Miss Margaret's attention was here arrested by a sharp cry from the patient little martyr before her. She had become so interested in her story, that she had quite forgotten the particular branch of business she was attending to, and so had gone on drawing up the lining here, and sticking in a pin there, until the poor child could scarcely breathe. At last, as she absently pinned through shoulder and all, the cry escaped which recalled her to her task.

Now the child had just been learning a history lesson for the next day, wherein the misdeeds of the Salem witches were recorded. And as she sobbed with the fright and the pain, the terrible suspicion flashed through her mind that Miss Martin was one of that amiable sisterhood revived; and, indeed, the face that bent over her favoured the conclusion. From that instant, it was only by bribes, threats, and, in fact, oftentimes punishment, that she could be induced to enter her tormentor's presence.

Miss Martin was, however, happily unconscious of the classical compliment involuntarily paid to her, and suggested to Mrs. Miller that some friend of Mrs. Jorden's ought to tell her how things were going on.

“If a stop is put to it now,” said she, “it's well and good for everybody but Mary Butler. *But if things——*”

Again the sentence was left unfinished, for the very people in question passed the window, and as they did so, Mr. Jorden gave Mary a letter, which she quickly slipped into her bag. Mrs. Miller was made a witness to that, as well as the peculiar eagerness of Mary's manner as she received it, and for the first time she began to think there was a foundation, at least, for what Miss

Martin had told her. She had allowed that lady to finish her recital because she knew it was useless to attempt to check the tide; paying little regard to it meanwhile, although she was vexed that her friend's name should be brought with a gossip of that character. Now, although she well knew Miss Martin's talent for the embroidery of unvarnished facts, quite exceeded her skill in plain-sewing, she was sure there was some cause, at least, though she doubted not it was a perfectly innocent one, for this really slanderous tale.

She, as well as Miss Martin, came to the resolution that Mrs. Jorden should know it, but from a different reason. She hoped that she could and would explain the mystery to the satisfaction of all, and she thought such an explanation was due to all the parties concerned. So she resolved that the next time she saw her friend she would have the riddle solved, and that she would call on her soon for that very purpose. But she was busy all that week assisting Miss Margaret with the children's spring dresses, and the next it rained every day. In fact, after Miss Martin's departure, she had almost forgotten the circumstance, until it was recalled by Miss Barnard, who came to pay her a sociable visit the first day of fair weather.

What was her surprise at learning from her visitor, that the same tale, exaggerated, and "with assurance made doubly sure," by real or pretended confirmations, was the popular topic of discussion throughout Rivertown! and Miss Barnard, being highly indignant, revealed Miss Martin's share in the tale, and entreated Mrs. Miller, as a most intimate friend, to beg that Mrs. Jorden would discontinue it at once. That very afternoon, as soon as Miss Barnard was gone, Mrs. Miller left the house on her friendly errand.

She had always been accustomed to enter Mrs. Jorden's parlours without ringing—a neighbourly practice called "running-in" at Rivertown—and as she opened the hall-door, she entered the more confidently as she heard visitors in the parlour. She readily understood the somewhat extraordinary scene that met her view.

Mrs. Jorden was standing with a coldly dignified air, nearly in the centre of the room; her face was flushed as if with the struggle of overmastering some passionate emotion; and her eyes flashed proudly, as she said to the ladies who were about leaving—

"Allow me to thank you for the kind interest you take in my welfare; and, at the same time, to assure you that I consider my husband to be the most competent guardian, both of himself, and of our domestic affairs."

Not a word in reply from the two, who turned so hastily that they stumbled upon Mrs. Miller, who stood perfectly quiet with the door-knob still in her hand.

"Good evening, Mrs. Harden, Mrs. Smith," said she, as the ladies recovered themselves. But there was no response, for, with unexampled quickness, they had hurried past. They gained the street before either spoke a word, and then, to Mrs. Harden's exclamation of "Did you ever?" Mrs. Smith replied with equal solemnity of tone, "I never *was* so struck!"

"After I took the trouble to go and tell her," said Mrs. Harden,

"Doing our duty as *friends*," said Mrs. Smith. "To burst out in that way!"

"I saw her bite her lips long before you'd got through."

"Well, I've done my part by her, that's all I can say;" and

Mrs. Harden indignantly twitched her unoffending green veil more closely over her face.

But to return to Mrs. Jorden, who, now that the excitement of the moment was passed, sobbed like a child.

"I can easily guess the meaning of all this," said Mrs. Miller, as she sat down on the sofa, and put her arm caressingly about her friend. "Mrs. Harden has been telling you what you should have heard from me a week since."

"She has been impertinently meddling with what does not at all concern her," sobbed Mrs. Jorden.

"But I know the whole story, Marian; and, indeed, Mrs. Harden is not the only person who thought it should be told you, though I can but wish it had been done by any one else, I confess. What is her version of the matter?"

"She absolutely told me that the whole town were talking about my husband's attentions to Mary Butler; and that some said I had discovered it, and was horribly jealous, while others pity me, it seems, as being quite in the dark. *I need their pity!* My good neighbours have done their best to enlighten me now, at any rate."

"But he does visit there a great deal."

"Yes; and who has a better right to go where he chooses?"

"You are angry, Marian," said Mrs. Miller, calmly.

"Well, I confess I am; but it is really unbearable. She gave me the whole history of the former slanderous tales, from which poor Mary suffered, evidently thinking I had not heard how vile a part she played."

"But have you never given reason for any one to say you were jealous of those visits to Mary?"

"Never!"

"Think for a moment—Miss Martin was sewing for you, was she not, three weeks ago?"

"Yes; but what has that to do with it? Do you suppose I made her my confidant?"

"Do not be unreasonable, Marian. Did she never overhear anything of the kind, said playfully, or otherwise?"

"Overhear!—is it possible!—does Miss Martin play the eaves-dropper?" and, as if a new light had flashed upon her, Mrs. Jorden was suddenly silent. "Yes—good—capital!" said she, at length, and the cloud of ill-humour suddenly disappeared from her face. "Now I understand it all. We were engaged that very evening at Mrs. Butler's. Mary had just received some new music from New York, and Henry was going over with his flute to try it; I had promised myself a nice sociable chat with her mother—you know they very often practise together. I wish I did love music, for Henry's sake."

"Well?"

"It proved to be a fearfully stormy night. So much so, that Henry went home with Miss Martin himself; it was not fit for a woman to be in the street."

"And, of course, Mary was disappointed."

"No, not entirely; that's the very point in question. We were talking it over just after tea; Henry said he could not endure to see any woman go out alone on such a night; that he thought the best plan was to take her home himself, and stop in at Mrs. Butler's a little while on his way home. I said playfully, 'Without me?' and then added, in the same tone, 'You give Mary quite too much of your precious time.' Henry's rejoinder was in the same spirit. 'You're only jealous of my walk with Miss Martin, Marie.' I remember distinctly that I replied, still

laughing, ‘No, I’m not inclined naturally to be jealous; but she is a dangerous companion for a susceptible youth.’ We were standing by the fire, and you know it’s the most natural thing in the world for Harry to put his arm about me, standing so near. He just attempted it, when I heard Miss Martin opening the dining-room door, and as I hate endearments before people, I pushed his arm aside, and turned to answer her question. Now there’s the whole story—there’s the grand foundation of Henry’s attentions to Mary Butler, and my jealousy.”

Mrs. Miller laughed heartily at the idea of any one’s being jealous of the amiable Miss Martin; but yet there were some things still unaccounted for. She herself had witnessed the reception of the letter, and then that miniature! But other visitors came in, and as it was nearly dark, Mrs. Miller soon took leave, resolving to have a perfect explanation at some future time.

As for Mrs. Jorden, she had quite recovered her good humour, and recounted merrily to her husband the particulars of the afternoon embassy from the “gossips of Rivertown.” At first, he was inclined to be very angry, but after a little thought, came to the conclusion the tale had no other foundation, and had been exaggerated on every hand. He, too, laughed very heartily at Miss Martin’s report of their little domestic conversation.

Early next morning, Mrs. Miller was greeted by a visit from her friend. She had been thinking over all that had occurred, and at last came to the conclusion it was best to probe the wound thoroughly. It was still with great delicacy and hesitation that she confided to Marian what she herself had seen, and the story of the miniature. What was her surprise at finding Mrs. Jorden grow more and more amused as she proceeded, and, at last, “clap-

ping her hands for very glee." Then there was a long confidential communication between the two, and good Mrs. Miller seemed to enjoy the joke as much as her friend; so much so, that even after Marian's departure an unwonted smile would now and then steal over her face, as if she held

"The secret of a merry jest
She did not care to speak."

CHAPTER V.

"The joy-bells are ringing,
Oh, come to the church;
You may see the bride pass,
If you stand in the porch."

"My second so resembles *him*,
Most people think them twins."—BAYLY.

SCARCELY three weeks from Mrs. Harden's friendly call upon Mrs. Jorden, and her subsequent unceremonious departure, there was an unusual bustle throughout all Rivertown. It was a bright spring day, the last of April, and from the majestic river that swept proudly past, to the cloudless sky o'erhead, all was tranquil, undisturbed loveliness. The distant mountains seemed to have assumed their most delicate tint of azure, the neighbouring foliage its freshest green, birds sang, and crocuses lifted their hardy blossoms from the sheltering leaves. Every one pronounced it "a perfect day."

Harriet Harden sat by an open window, altering the arrange-

ment of some bows upon a new straw bonnet, which had come home the night before. She too rejoiced in the loveliness of the day, for she thought if it continued so mild, she might venture to exhibit it that very afternoon. The "face flowers" had been pinned in for the tenth time at least, and as she paused before the little mirror to observe the increased effect, the door was hurriedly thrown open, and Mrs. Smith, quite out of breath, appeared.

"Put on your bonnet this minute," was her first salutation, without stopping to see that such a command was quite uncalled for, "and come with me up to the church. There's going to be a wedding there this morning."

"For goodness sake, who is it?"

"Nobody knows—it's the queerest thing in the world. It seems Adeline was going by, about a quarter of an hour ago, and seeing the door opened, she looked in. There was nobody there but Benton, the sexton, and she asked him how it happened? He looked vexed enough, for a minute or two, and then said there was to be a wedding there at nine o'clock; but he could n't tell who was going to be married. Add tried to get it out of him, but the old fellow kept his secret. It's ten minutes of nine now, so hurry. Where's your mother?"

Not far off, as you might suppose; so both mother and daughter sallied forth on the instant, and strange to say, they met more people on the way than had ever been known to collect for anything short of a Fourth of July fire company procession. Others than Adeline Mitchell must have seen the church-door ajar.

Our readers need not suppose, from the application of the definite article, that this was the only church in Rivertown. There

were the Presbyterian, the Dutch-Reformed, the Baptist, Methodist, and Universalist—*meeting houses* they were called—and the Roman Catholics held monthly services in the old masonic lodge. But the building, towards which so many were hastening, was owned by the Episcopalians, and so known only as *the church, par excellence*, though its baptismal name was Trinity.

Up the high steps of this neat and most comfortable edifice many a group was passing, by the time the Hardens came in sight, mostly composed of ladies and school-girls, who had diverged from their proper path to the “Female Seminary,” attracted by the rumour of a wedding near at hand. The square old-fashioned pews filled first—from them you could see and not be seen—but many a face looked out from the central aisles as the bridal party passed up its length. There had been a few moments of anxious suspense; but soon Mrs. Jorden, her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Jackson, Mrs. Miller, Miss Barnard, and several familiar faces, were successively recognized.

But who was the bride? Nobody could see her face, for she kept her veil down until she reached the chancel. A moment's reverent pause, during which Adeline Mitchell took the opportunity to whisper that Mr. Jorden was standing next the bride—“how odd;” and Harriet motioned back for her to keep still, or else that it was n't him, she could n't tell which.

Then came the address to the congregation, the solemn charge to those about to take these most fearful vows upon themselves.

“Now we shall know,” whispered Mrs. Smith to Harriet; but, unfortunately, that very whisper prevented her hearing the names of the parties. Again, a manly voice followed the guidance of their pastor.

Harriet could have screamed with impatience, for a little girl

in the next pew tripped over the stool on which she was mounted, and came down with a crash, just as the names were pronounced. But at that moment a gentle, but untrembling voice, said—"I, Mary, take thee, Carroll, to be my wedded husband."

Harriet heard not another word; it was Mary Butler's voice; Mr. Jorden's brother was the bridegroom! All was reeling about her. The party at the altar, the eager spectators, the solid pillars of the church themselves, seemed dancing before her. When she recovered from her swoon-like astonishment, the benediction had been pronounced, and the bride, never so beautiful as now, turned from the chancel.

There were smiles and congratulations among the happy party; Mrs. Butler looking younger by ten years, Mrs. Harry Jorden casting triumphant, and almost withering glances towards the party she had just discovered in Mr. Mitchell's pew. Then they passed slowly down the aisle, so near, that Mary's bridal veil almost touched Harriet's face, and as the young husband turned to rearrange it, she started to see how nearly he resembled his brother. The same eyes, the same smile; but for a slight difference in height, they might have been mistaken for each other.

"*I cannot believe my own eyes,*" said Mrs. Harden, as the group stood on the church steps and watched the carriage drive away.

"Nor I," echoed Mrs. Smith.

"How did she ever manage to keep it so still?" continued the elder lady.

"I don't see."

"Nor I," said Mrs. Smith, again.

"He was adopted by his uncle, Carroll Livingston, when he was a perfect child."

"Then they went to Europe, you know."

"Yes; and he got back just in time for Henry's wedding, Mrs. Harden."

"Mary Butler was first bridesmaid, and that's how it all happened. Don't you remember Mrs. Jackson told us he had to go right on to Baltimore, and could n't come up to her party?"

"So she did; but they were together two weeks in New York, and she was there so long last fall, you know, where their business was being settled. They say all his letters came directed to his brother."

"That's so we should n't find it out, I'll warrant."

"He's immensely rich, Mrs. Harden; his uncle is an old bachelor, you know. I've heard they live in *splendid* style."

"That old gentleman with Mrs. Butler must have been his uncle, then; and they must be the passengers John saw come off the day-boat yesterday."

"The *luck* of some people!"

"Yes," and Mrs. Harden sighed deeply, as she thought Harriet was not included in that fortunate class.

That amiable, and now thoroughly mortified young lady, had walked off in a confidential chat with Adeline; after having ascertained from a mutual acquaintance that the bridal party were all going off in the day-boat, and that Mrs. Butler was going to live with Mary in Baltimore. No telegraphic dispatch of the "latest advices per steamer," ever sped with more rapidity than every conceivable rumour, with regard to the morning's surprise, was published.

"That must have been *his brother's* miniature, after all, Adeline," said Harriet, trying to look unconcerned.

"I always knew you ran before you were sent. You've got me into a pretty fuss."

"How could I help it? how did I know to the contrary? and you said quite as much about it as I did."

"I didn't say half as much. Moreover, I don't read other people's letters."

Miss Harden did not venture to speak, but she gave a look of indignation and contempt that might have withered any one, had it been deserved. Miss Mitchell vouchsafed no word in reply, but coolly walked down the next street, without so much as bowing.

From that day there was enmity between the houses of Harden and Mitchell; and from that day Mary Butler was envied by the "gossips of Rivertown."

Mrs. Henry Jorden never passed Mrs. Harden and Mrs. Smith without a peculiar smile; and Mrs. Margaret Martin fitted no more dresses in her house thenceforth.

SKETCH THE THIRD.

DEATH AND THE BURIAL.

CHAPTER I.

"I feel the shadow on my brow,
The sickness at my heart—
Alas ! I look on those I love,
And 'tis so hard to part."

HE summer passed as summers had done in Rivertown for the last ten years at least. There was one evening party, two pic-nics, and a wedding, to vary the monotony. Two families, the Bays and the Barnards, visited Niagara, to the scandal of those who wondered how they could afford it, and Miss Seymour joined the party of a relative residing in New York, and passed two weeks at Newport. Miss Seymour became, for a while, quite the rage, for she had dined with Daniel Webster, on which occasion the distinguished authoress, Mrs. ——, sat opposite to her, and Senator S. was pointed out after dinner. Miss Seymour did not usually mention that this was at the "ladies' ordinary" of the Revere House; probably she thought this was "not for them to know." But if she was not a lion herself, she had seen lions, and consequently had innumerable calls and visits shortly after her return.

Then a family from New York had been boarding at the "Rivertown House," and their out-comings and in-goings offered some relief. Moreover, the Forresters, from Albany, had passed

two months at their country-house, a mile or two below the town, and several times their carriage, with its liveried coachman, had gathered its crowd of admirers at the street corners and shop windows. Not a few Rivertonians visited their *country relatives* in July and August, and others among the first circle paid similar family visits in New England or the Middle States. Journeys that from henceforth became data—"the year that I went to Connecticut," or "the spring we were getting ready to go to New Jersey," being often and particularly alluded to.

Rivertonians in general were not a migratory people; one trip to New York city, and two as far as Albany, often sufficing for life-time adventures. Many of the oldest inhabitants could never be persuaded to "court peril" in the wake of the rushing locomotive, and not a few had never set foot upon a steamboat, though numberless were the elegant vessels that passed their wharves daily, preferring the more tardy, but in their eyes far safer conveyance of a "sloop," did occasion require them to visit the metropolis.

Among our acquaintances, the travelling fever, this particular season, seemed contagious. Miss Barnard, as we have before said, visited Niagara, as did the Jacksons and the Jordens, joining a party made up by the uncle of the Jordens, Livingston Carroll, Esq. Adeline Mitchell had passed several weeks with a married sister who resided in Dutchess County, and the Hardens went as far as Stockbridge, in quite an opposite direction. But the summer was over; September found all once more at home, and fall house-cleanings rapidly progressing. Mrs. Henry Jorden was packing, or rather covering furniture; Adeline Mitchell could not guess what for, until it was reported that the house was to be shut up in October, and the Jordens were to pass the ensuing

winter with their brother at Baltimore. Mr. Jorden had business at Washington, which would detain him most of the time, and thus the arrangement became not only pleasant, but advisable.

Yet Mrs. Smith and Miss Mitchell would continue to call it airs and extravagance, while Mrs. Folger wondered "*if they would pay board* ; if not, it was a saving." Mrs. Jackson alone regretted the change. She was still, comparatively, a stranger in Rivertown, as they had resided there but a few years. She had never been particularly fond of the place or the people, and but that Mr. Jackson's presence was absolutely necessary near his large and flourishing manufactory, would never have consented even to a temporary residence there. This feeling had, in a measure, worn away, as she came to know and appreciate the warm hearts of those who won her own by their friendly courtesy ; and at the time of her sister's marriage she began to look with something like satisfaction upon Rivertown as a home.

"It will be very lonely, Marian," said she, the evening before their departure ; "Mary and yourself both away—but I know it will be pleasanter for you, and I will try to be as happy as possible without you."

Mrs. Jorden "rejoiced that she was of enough consequence to be missed," and, laughingly, added—"But then your particular friends, Mrs. Harden and Mrs. Folger, will still be with you, and I have no doubt Mrs. Smith will be neighbourly."

"Do not jest to-night Marian," sadly returned her sister. "I have been strangely troubled from the time Mary proposed this long separation. You know I have no faith in presentiments, but I have felt as if we should never meet again ; or, if we did, not happily. Sometimes I think Archie, my precious one, may be taken from me ; but that thought is too terrible. If I should

die this winter, Marie, be as a sister and a mother to the dear ones I must leave”

“My best of sisters, pray do not say such horrid things,” was the reply. “Are you not as well as ever? and Archie I never saw in better spirits.”

Mrs. Jackson called the noble little fellow to her, and parting the thick waves of his hair, looked long and earnestly into his deep blue eyes. So earnestly, that the boy was alarmed, and begged to go back to Uncle Henry, who had promised to let him ride upon Nero; and Marian said—

“Yes, run away, pet, mamma is not well. Dear sister, do not frighten us all by these dismal forebodings.”

Mrs. Jackson felt that it was selfish thus to obtrude sad thoughts on their parting; and, to tell the truth, the shadow passed as the firm tread and manly tone of her husband gave warning of his approach. So the last evening glided away in mirth and song; for Mr. Jackson was never known to be more brilliant than now, pouring out sparkling anecdotes and unstudied *bon mots*, without thought or effort. Archie was allowed to stay up long past his usual bed-time, as he was an especial favourite with “Uncle Harry,” and Mrs. Jackson sang old songs they had long known and loved.

Yes, it was a very merry evening; and yet when Mrs. Jackson bade them good night, and came back to the warmly lighted parlour, a strange chill darted like an ice-bolt through her heart, and she leaned her head upon her husband’s shoulder and wept.

He chided her gently, even while he drew her more closely to his heart, for she told him it was not simple sorrow at their transient separation. And then he led her to the couch where her child slumbered peacefully, and bade her mark how ruddy

was the glow upon his cheek, and how gently the drapery about him was stirred by the quiet heaving of his little form.

"What can come to disturb the happiness of our little household?" said her husband, fondly; but even as she smiled through her tears, the echo in her heart whispered "*Death!*"

CHAPTER II.

"She is leaning back now languid,
And her cheek is white;
Only on the drooping eyelash,
Glistens tearful light,
Cold, sunshine, hours are gone,
Yet the lady watches on."—L. E. L.

 OR several weeks after the departure of Mrs. Jorden, nothing occurred to realize even the lightest of Mrs. Jackson's sad forebodings. The gorgeous autumn landscape slowly cast aside its wealth of golden and crimson foliage, the summits of the Catskills became more sharply defined against the clear blue sky, and so winter was at the very door ere his approach was suspected.

There is nothing more desolate than the streets of a small country town, in a northern latitude, at the close of the fall. The sidewalks are carpeted with withered leaves that rustle to the footsteps of the few passers-by; a cloud of dust obscures the vision, while the slowly creaking signs and flapping shutters are in melancholy and discordant union. Little children hurry to and from school, with well-worn dinner baskets and faded hoods;

the solitary strips of red flannel or dark broad-cloth, that have taken the place of the merchant's flaunting display of summer fabrics, shiver in the chill blast; and the few baskets of withered apples and dark-coated chestnuts, that still linger around the doors of the various provision stores, grow darker and more shrunken as the week slips slowly by. The mellow radiance of the Indian summer has departed, the morning sun has scarcely power to dissolve the last night's frost, and the wayside pools are skirted with a brittle coating of ice. Now and then a large farm wagon creaks slowly down the street; once or twice through the day the whirl of a lighter vehicle tells you that the physician is speeding on his errand of mercy; but otherwise the silence is rarely disturbed. The sky grows dark as evening draws on, not with heaped and threatening clouds, but a leaden, heavy, impenetrable pall sweeps slowly over the horizon.

It was on such a day as this that Mrs. Jackson turned shivering from the door-step of her comfortable and peaceful home. She had accompanied her husband a little way on his morning walk, and had parted with a fond pressure of the hand, and a glance that told him how dearer than life he had become. Archie was playfully careering round the room with the hearth-brush for a steed, and the kitten purred in undisturbed repose before the glowing grate.

She drew her work-basket towards her, and, lying on the piles of snowy linen, found an unopened letter, received in her absence. It was from Marian, and bore the impress of her joyous spirit in every line. They were all so happy, and needed but her presence to make that happiness complete. Mrs. Butler was at the head of their elegant mansion, and Mr. Carroll grew daily more fond of his adopted daughter, who had already won for herself hosts

of new friends. They were to go to Washington in January, and Marian descanted at length on the pleasures she expected to enjoy.

Mrs. Jackson allowed the letter to fall upon the carpet, as she mused over its contents. "How can people plan for the future?" thought she; and then, vexed at herself for her own gloomy mood, she called Archie to her, and resolutely threw it aside as she listened to his childish prattle. Mr. Jackson very rarely returned until nightfall, these short, cold days, as the manufactory was a mile or two distant, upon a small stream that paid its gentle tribute to their beautiful river. So the mid-day meal was solitary; and after it was over, Mrs. Miller paid a friendly visit of an hour or two, and they chatted together of the absent ones. The cold, grey clouds were already veiling the setting sun as her visitor took her leave, and with cheerful alacrity Mrs. Jackson began to prepare for her husband's return:—the hearth nicely swept, the easy-chair in its cosiest corner, the dressing-gown thrown over it, and the slippers, embroidered by her own hand, basking in the fire-light. Through a half-open door the neat tea-table was seen, and Archie, with his soft curls dancing to his restless motion, was busied in assisting, or rather delaying a tidy servant girl in its arrangement.

Nothing could be more cheerful or more home-like, and Mrs. Jackson cast a look of satisfaction over all, as she sat down at the window to catch the first glimpse of the returning husband and father. Slowly the twilight deepened over the already silent streets. Then lights flashed from the opposite windows, and a glare for the moment filled the room as a torch was applied to the street-lamp on the corner. It was very strange that Mr. Jackson did not come!

Another half hour passed, the room was quite dark, for she would not have the lamp lighted until *he* should arrive. Then Archie began fretting for his supper, and, at last, she was obliged to leave her watch to quiet the impatient child. Again the clock struck slowly and distinctly; every stroke sounded like a knell. An undefined superstitious fear crept over her—oh! there was a step at last. But it was not *he*; only a message from some friendly neighbour. Eight-nine o'clock struck. Archie had been quietly sleeping an hour or two; still she was alone, and undefined terror began to shape itself. Then she tried to smile at her own fears; he had found business to detain him—perhaps he had met a friend. She tried to play, but closed the instrument ere the melody was half completed; and so she sat, at last, cowering over the fire that now burned dimly, while the minutes passed like years.

A sound broke the stillness; there was a carriage coming rapidly up the street—what could it mean? It paused before the door of a physician residing near them, and then at their own. A stranger sprang upon the pavement—another—and then she saw they were lifting out a helpless, rigid form.

The truth came to her with a shock—she felt it all; but the scream that rose to her lips found no utterance, only a low moan as she motioned them to bear their burden into that once cheerful parlour. She felt the hand of their family physician upon her shoulder; but she had knelt beside the sofa, and had found the heart that once thrilled so warmly. There was no pulse—not even a low flutter. Yes!—yes!—faint as a wounded bird's, the life-pulse thrilled to her hand; then, for the first time, she spoke. She looked up to the pitying eye of the friend who bent over her, and murmured—

"My husband is *not* dead — no, not *dead!* You can save him!"

She did not even ask what had stricken him so from high health. A glance had told her all. The damp, heavy masses of hair that clung to the pallid face, the cloak wrapped loosely about those clinging garments. There was no need of words.

Through that long, fearful night, hope and despair came alternately to those faithful attendants. Not for an instant could the wife be persuaded to leave the room. She chafed the rigid hands, she pressed the death-like form closely to her, as if her own beating, throbbing heart could inspire it with new life. Still those marble lids unclosed not, and no breath stirred the wan lips. "Speak to me, my husband, once more! One smile—one pressure of the hand!" But there came no answer to those wailing cries.

Then the first struggling beam of the new day stole into the room. The fire had gone out, the lamps flickered coldly, and a more terrible pallor settled upon that still, pale face.

A woman's voice said, "There is no hope! Dead!—dead!—my husband is *dead!*" And then came a fearful burst of sobs and agonized wailing, that rent the very heart of the kind man who tried in vain to comfort her. He had little consolation to offer; she had spoken truly—there was *no hope*.

CHAPTER III.

"Tossing through the restless night,
Sleep banish'd from her pillow, and her brain
Weary with sense of dull and stifling pain,
Yearning and praying for the blessed light."



ROM the deep stupour of despair that followed, even the quick tread and anxious inquiries of those that came to proffer assistance and sympathy, at first failed to rouse her. The terrible news sped like wildfire through the town, and an hour after daybreak, a little crowd was gathered before the door to know if such fearful tidings could be true. There they learned, from Dr. Chester, that Mr. Jackson, being detained much later than usual, had attempted to cross a narrow plank thrown over a part of the basin formed by the stream just below the factory, to save going round by the larger bridge. It was quite dark, and missing a step, he was precipitated into the ice-cold pool. His involuntary cry brought speedy assistance; but ere he could be rescued, the chill and the struggle had exhausted him, and though life was not quite extinct, he seemed rapidly sinking. No medical assistance being at hand, and the overseer of the works absent, the men who rescued him made a few unsuccessful attempts to restore suspended animation, and then, in their terror, could think of no alternative but hurrying into the town. Had proper assistance been at once obtained, the fatal catastrophe might, perhaps,

have been averted; but by the time his home was reached, life was ebbing fast, and aid was all in vain.

For the first time since his recollection, little Archie awoke and did not find his mother near him. His gentle call of "Mamma! mamma!" had no response: frightened, he knew not why, he slipped from his crib and crept softly into the next room. There was a gentleman standing near his mamma, who was lying upon the bed moaning, now and then, but with her eyes closed as if asleep. "Where is my papa?" said the little fellow, timidly. The gentleman did not answer him, but lifted him to the side of his mother, and motioned him to awake her.

"Wake up, dear mamma—tell me where my father is," sobbed the child, now terribly frightened at the unusual sight. At first, Mrs. Jackson did not seem to know who had spoken, but as she felt those little arms clasping her neck, that soft cheek nestling by her own, she pressed her child convulsively to her heart, and murmured—

"My fatherless little one, God help us both!"

The kind physician stole softly away; his object was accomplished, for he felt that if once roused, there was no danger but that the strong mind and the *mother's heart* would rise above her sorrow. Nor was he mistaken. From that moment a calmness that would have been fearful in a less resolute nature, seemed to take possession of her. She entered once more upon the duties of actual life, that must be performed even though the heart is breaking. In a small household there is much that only its mistress can properly direct; and in the country there are many things connected with an event like that just recorded, which cannot be performed by hirelings, as in the city, where even *death* is made a source of traffic and of gain.

Much assistance was proffered, but she rejected all save such as was absolutely necessary. Dr. Chester was her adviser, and through him she made every necessary arrangement for the burial.

Weak minds, who shrink from responsibility, or those residing where custom forbids such a fearful task, little know how much *minute* agony is spared them. They can retire to the room recently gladdened by the presence of the lost one, and weep in silence over their sorrow. They watch, perhaps, by the still, cold form, but know not whose hand has arrayed it for the bridal of the grave, or by whom it shall be consigned to that last resting-place. A man, pompous in the habitual sadness he must needs assume, passes here and there about the house with a tread so softened that it has become almost stealthy. It is he who arranges every thing; the undertaker, whose very presence, even in a crowded street, brings a chill to those whom the death of friends has made terribly familiar with his solemn bearing.

Far different was the task of her so suddenly widowed. The most minute detail passed before her notice; she was not even left to watch alone beside her dead. Visitors from curiosity, and those who came to sympathize truly, were constantly thronging in to question, to advise, and to console. Again, and again, each harrowing circumstance was recounted and commented on. More than once was she tortured by well meant, but really unkind regrets, as—"If there had only been some one there who understood what ought to have been done!" "Don't you think if Dr. Chester could have seen him at first, he might have been alive now?" "Are you sure that everything was tried? I've heard that people have come to, hours after the doctor had given them up." And when all this was met with a calm, sad cold-

ness, that many called indifference, the good people wondered how she could feel "*so resigned*."

They little knew what an effort that very calmness cost. That more than once a shriek had risen to those untrembling lips as some fearful recollection came; a shriek that would have betrayed all the pent-up agony of that lonely, lonely heart; but was checked and stifled even when bursting forth. They had not seen her sobbing like a child when first she met the few friends to whom her proud nature had yielded all love and confidence; nor did they know how often, during the long sleepless nights, she pressed her child with a grasp of fear close and closer to her heart, while her lips murmured prayers for strength and fortitude, or sobbed, brokenly, the name of him who no longer could return her tenderness. "A stranger in a strange land" alone knows the fulness of desolation, when those who made that exile home, have been taken. "Miserable comforters are ye all," is the heart's involuntary language, as it yearns for a mother's kiss, a sister's tenderness. And so this outward calmness would probably have passed away, could Marian's arms have been twined about her. Orphaned from childhood, they had loved each other with a deep devotion, and now in her loneliness, there came an almost fearful longing to hear that sister's gentle voice.

Archie, with his childish grief, and smiles that came in its very midst, was her greatest consolation. His father's brow, his glancing smile, at times but increased her pain, and again she would say, "Arthur, you cannot be taken from me wholly while your son shall live." Strange as it seemed to some, she rarely entered the room where lay that lifeless form. The rigid outlines, the fearful pallor, brought back every event of the fearful night, never to be erased from her memory. She felt that all

strength would desert her, that she should go mad, if she dwelt upon these things, and so turned back even when her hand was upon the door. For the sake of her child, she had resolved to welcome life, even when death would have been preferable, and so she struggled onward sick at heart and desolate.

She knew that all would be over ere her sister could reach her, and she felt that it would require all her fortitude to pass through the terrible ordeal alone.

Several of the neighbours had dropped in, the evening before the day appointed for the funeral. They were sitting in almost unbroken silence, though now and then a whispered comment upon the weather was exchanged in that "sick-room voice" that is so peculiarly annoying. Mrs. Harden, who had been most constant in her attendance, sat near Mrs. Jackson; and Mrs. Smith, emboldened by the peculiar circumstances of the case, had accompanied her, though there had been no previous acquaintance. Dr. Chester's kind little wife glided about the room, and accompanied many, whom a vulgar curiosity had drawn thither, to the room that was so soon to be vacant:—a custom sanctioned by habit in country neighbourhoods, of all others, most barbarous, and one which can but harrow the hearts of the survivors. Mrs. Jackson felt this deeply, as the strange voices and muffled steps fell upon her ear; and she longed to pray them all to leave her, to allow her at least the consolation of solitude.

Suddenly a voice, that came like the memory of a dream, startled her. She glanced towards the open door, and in a moment, with outstretched arms, she had flown by them all, and was clasped to the heart of one just entering the doorway.

"My poor Annie!" was all that reached the ears of the astonished spectators; then, for the first time, they heard an

utterance of the sorrow so hidden from them. Mrs. Jackson was sobbing wildly upon the breast of the stranger; and then he lifted her, as he would have borne a child, to the next room, for she had fainted.

Mrs. Harden seized a vinaigrette, and hurried after them; but Mrs. Chester and the stranger were already chafing the cold hands; and oh! how ghastly was that pale face, as the long, dark hair fell unloosed about it! "Poor creature!" said Mrs. Harden, touched with something like genuine compassion, and then, as the swoon passed, she heard Mrs. Jackson murmur, "Where is Edward? I am sure he was here!"

Mrs. Chester motioned for Mrs. Harden to follow her, and she was obliged to leave before her curiosity was satisfied as to Mrs. Jackson's emotion at the sight of one whom they had never seen before. "It must be Mr. Jackson's brother," said Mrs. Chester, as they waited for a moment in the passage, to see if their aid would again be needed.

Mrs. Harden seized upon the idea in triumph, and returning to the parlour, it was soon whispered about that Mr. Jackson's brother had come to attend the funeral. One by one the neighbours went away, as they found Mrs. Jackson did not return, and nothing further could be learned; but Mrs. Harden went in and kissed the sufferer "good night;" a kiss from which Mrs. Jackson shrank, although she tried to smile kindly at so unusual an evidence of interest.

They sat in silence for some minutes after her departure, and then Mrs. Jackson said—

"Will you not go with me to look upon him now? I am stronger, and I think I could bear it with you near me."

So, silently they entered the chamber of death, and tears

gushed to the eyes of that strong, proud man, as he saw the face of his brother, so changed since their last parting. Mrs. Jackson looked imploringly up to him ; her face was tearless, but the agony of expression was unutterable. She had bent down to kiss that marble brow, and its coldness chilled her very soul ; and now, for the first time, her tenderness met with no return. The brother clasped her trembling form, and in a deep voice, said—

“ God and the spirit of our lost one bear me witness, Annie, I will watch over you and your child as over my own life ! ”

She had severed one curl from those that lay caressingly about the dear face ; pressed her hand for an instant over the cold brow, and as she passed from the room, leaning upon a strong arm, she felt that she had bidden a last farewell to him who had made the sunshine of life's morning.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Be not dismay'd, for as thy day
Thy strength shall surely be,
And self-forgetfulness will win
A noble victory.”

HEY were sitting alone scarce a week after the funeral, the widow and her husband's brother. “ The widow”—how she had started as she heard the term applied to herself that day !

Archie's large, wondering eyes were at length closed in a sweet sleep. Poor little fellow ! he had grown weary of asking “ why

papa did not wake?" — and "why a great lady like mamma should cry?" He had never seen his mother shed tears before, and had always been taught that his own were unmanly. But though he would now and then burst into a passionate fit of weeping, when told that "papa would never kiss him again," the novelty of everything around speedily hushed his sorrow.

Not so with his mother. She now began faintly to realize that a life-long separation was commenced. A reaction from her strange composure seemed to be at hand. But it was not so. Her strong nature had regained its habitual self-control; and her brother wondered at, and admired, what so many might have misunderstood.

At length, the silence became almost painful · and, by way of commencing a conversation, Edward said—

"That was a very lady-like woman who passed me at the door this afternoon."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Jackson, with a gleam almost like pleasure lighting up her face. "I have known her but a very little while—she is the wife of a clergyman recently come among us, or minister, I should perhaps say, as they belong to the Congregationalist denomination. Our own rector has left us, and his successor will not be here for some months. Mrs. Townsend and her husband have both been very kind to me."

"It was he who officiated at the funeral, was it not?—a tall, sad-looking man? I think he has learned sympathy by sorrow."

There was another long pause; the brother was evidently wishing to speak upon a topic he seemed to fear introducing.

"I must return this week, Annie—did I tell you?" he said, at length.

"Must it be so soon? I had hoped you could stay until Marian came, at least."

"And she will be here?"

"Indeed, I cannot tell when. If I did not know it was my sister, I should be pained at what might seem an unkind delay."

"Annie, have you any plan for the future?"

"I have thought a little about it," said she, sadly.

"And I, too, have been trying to see what will be best for you. The manufactory must be stopped at once, I suppose?"

"Will it not be a great loss, and, at the same time, throw many out of employment this cold weather?"

"I fear so."

"Then why not let it go on?"

"It would be impossible—there is no one to attend to it here; and I can visit you but seldom."

"Does not the overseer, Mr. Stone, understand his business thoroughly? Arthur"—and there was a slight faltering in the tone—"trusted him fully."

"Yes—I was surprised, this afternoon, to find how thoroughly he comprehended every point in the case. He says if we can retain it till spring, a purchaser might easily be found, and you would lose little or nothing. But the trouble is, there must be a responsible head of the establishment till then."

"Could not you assume the responsibility?"

"Nominally, I could."

"And I can take it in reality."

"You, Annie?" said her brother, with a start of astonishment. "I do not understand you."

"It is no sudden resolution," replied Mrs. Jackson, thought-

fully. "From the moment I saw those poor people join in that sad procession, I have been wishing I could do something for them."

"But you know nothing of business."

"You forget I am something of a book-keeper, and that Arthur often consulted me in his arrangements. I think, with a little application, and with Mr. Stone's assistance, I could arrange all necessary matters."

"It is a wild scheme, Annie. Would it not be better to take a more natural course, even though at a sacrifice of some property?"

"And of the comfort of all the operatives?"

Although her brother was at first fairly staggered at the proposal, he was not proof against the many arguments in favour of her scheme, which she now brought before him. It had rapidly matured by her quick, sagacious mind, and he was astonished to see how readily she entered into all the difficulties of the case.

"And finally," said she, as she closed her explanation, "you have promised to be here as often as your own business will allow, and you can advise me upon all important points."

"But it is so unprecedented, Annie."

"Rare, perhaps, but not without precedent. Do you not remember that my favourite, Madame Guyon, was her husband's executor, and arranged all the troublesome law suits in which he had been involved. I could point you to many other instances, not so illustrious, perhaps, but quite as worthy."

Edward sat for some time in deep thought. He could but contrast the thoughtful countenance before him, with the timid, girl-

ish face so beautiful at his brother's bridal; and his heart grew sad at the change a few years had wrought.

Suddenly she came softly towards him, and put her hand upon his shoulder.

"I fear you misunderstand me; you think me cold, worldly—must I say *avaricious*?" and her eyes sought his own reproachfully.

"Ah! no, my sister—it is you who have mistaken me. I appreciate all you would do;—you would have Arthur's son enter the world dependent upon none:—you forget your own sorrow in the thought of what might befall the families of these poor men. But I fear you mistake your own strength—you should be free from all care, now."

"Will not the necessity for action be strength in itself? I shall have no time for those maddening recollections. Believe me, it will be best so."

There had been a heavy fall of snow during the afternoon, and a carriage had reached the door almost without sound. There were footsteps in the hall as she ceased speaking, and ere she could rise from her seat, Marian's arms were about her neck, and Marian's tears were mingled with her own.

The sad presentiment had been most mournfully fulfilled—the sisters had met in sorrow.

SKETCH THE FOURTH.

MRS. HARDEN'S QUILTING.

CHAPTER I.

I think it must reach Mrs. Clackett's ears within twenty-four hours, and then the business, you know, is as good as done.—*School for Scandal*.

 DECLARE," said Mrs. Harden, as she dusted the china ornaments upon the mantel, "quiltings are going quite out of fashion now-a-days. When I was a girl—(not one in ten played the piano then; no, nor one in twenty)—nobody could get married without one or two quilting frolics; and that's the way we usually found out what was going on. Just as soon as we saw a girl doing a star block, or piecing out a 'rising sun,' we began to suspect there was a beau in the case."

"Who have you invited this morning, ma?" asked Harriet, at this pause.

"Nobody but those we talked over yesterday. Mrs. Smith, Miss Martin, and Mrs. Folger. You know that more than four can't quilt on a side, and I shall be busy about getting tea some of the time."

"I do hope Mrs. Folger will leave Bobby and the twins at home. If she doesn't, it will take *me* all the time to wait on them;" and Miss Harriet twirled impatiently around upon the

music-stool, and went into a vigorous practice of "Scenes that are Brightest."

"I *should* think, Harriet," was the next interruption, "that you might just as well be helping me as screaming that song. You've left everything in the world for me to see to."

"If the world had nobody else to look after it, 'twould soon come to an end," muttered the dutiful daughter.

"What's that you said?" broke in the mother, sharply.

But Harriet only sang the louder—

"Words cannot scatter—"

A *fracas* was evidently pending, when Mrs. Harden's attention was diverted.

"For goodness sake!" said she, rushing to the window, "if Mrs. Jackson isn't going out to ride again with her husband's brother! Of all the scandalous things I *ever* heard of, that woman's conduct is the most open. What a sweet little horse and cutter!"

"And such a lovely mat! Well, I don't know that I should mind being a young widow myself, if I could get waited on in that style. They won't be home before afternoon, now you see."

"They don't even take Archie with them half the time. Well, it's *Mrs. Jackson*, that's all I can say; but if it had been you or me, the whole town would be in arms."

"See how he lifts her in. How old should you think he was, ma?"

"Not a day over thirty, I'll be bound. He's younger looking, a good deal, than his brother was. Take care, they'll see you—come a little nearer this way."

"I wonder if he's rich. See how he tucks the buffalo around her—I declare, how loving that 'thank you' was! Well!"

"It must be excellent sleighing," remarked Mrs. Harden, as the light vehicle glided out of sight.

The curtain was rolled down, Miss Harriet recommenced her practice, despite the previous conversation, and Mrs. Harden departed to communicate the late observations to Hannah, who, by the way, was Mrs. Harden's confidant, and even counsellor—that is, she always volunteered her opinion on every subject under family discussion.

The expected visitors arrived, with the exception of Miss Martin. She was engaged "half a day" at Miss Barnard's, and had promised Mrs. Harden to run in and take her place at the quilt, "by way of change," the rest of the day.

Mrs. Folger did not bring Bobby, who had a bad cold, but the twins were there in very short dresses, and very wide pantalettes. They had somewhat increased in stature since we made their acquaintance two years before, and were now at that interesting age graphically described as "just old enough to be all the time in mischief."

There was some little trouble in getting comfortably settled at the quilt. The frame was too high for Mrs. Smith, and, when altered, too low for Mrs. Folger; when this difficulty was obviated by placing "the bars" upon the backs of eight chairs,—a movement which made the centre of gravity very indeterminate, and consequently insecure,—it was discovered that the chalk marks were all rubbed out while they had been at work. Then Mrs. Folger's thimble was missing, though she was sure she had it on leaving home. Mrs. Harden's did duty as a substitute, but being somewhat too large, it was constantly falling off and rolling

into the little hollow in the centre of the quilt, thus causing a deal of stretching over and poking about, before it could be regained.

At length all was adjusted, and the "border" was commeneed. Mrs. Harden had waited but till now for the communication of the morning's observations.

"Was it possible!"—"Could any woman forget her husband so soon!"—(Mrs. Smith seemed not to remember that *her* second marriage had taken place within the year after her husband's death.)

"Let's see," said she. "It's just three months, day before yesterday, since the funeral. I had my cloak made the day after it, and Miss Martin and I talked it all over together."

"By the way, your cloak is elegant," chimed in Mrs. Harden. "But about the funeral—don't you remember what I said to you as we came home? Mrs. Smith, says I, as true as you're alive, if that man ain't married, or going to be, 't will make a match."

"Oh, it was plain enough the very night he came. Don't you remember how she fairly threw herself into his arms? Something said to me then, (though I had no *idea* of who he was,) 'Mrs. Jackson will *marry* that man!'"

"Then, you know, I carried the salts into her room, and he was hanging over her and calling her all kinds of things. He kissed her even, and her husband lying dead in the house!"

"Horrors! you never told me that—(hand me the scissors.) —I should have thought they would have been afraid he would have risen up before them."

"And then her setting herself up to go on with that factory. It's all of a piece. I've heard she planned it all out the very day of the funeral."

"And she pretending to feel so bad, Mrs. Harden. The hypocrisy of some people!"

"I never thought she cared much about her husband, between you and I," replied that lady. "How she went on with young Dr. Wheelock, long before his death!"

"How many times has Edward Jackson been up, since then?" asked Mrs. Folger.

"This is the *third* time. To be sure, it's not far to come, and I thought nothing about it"—(as we have seen, dear reader)—"until after the river closed. But any man that wants to see a woman enough to pay stage fare all the way from New York, and to take such a ride in the middle of winter, must be pretty deep in love. That's all *I* can say."

Here Mrs. Harden quilted into Mrs. Smith's elbow; and as they had come to such uncomfortably close quarters, she concluded to "mark" awhile, until they were ready to roll up.

Before that operation was concluded, Miss Martin arrived, who, breathlessly, told them to go to the window "quick." In the agitation of the moment, the front of the quilt was knocked down; but they did not stop to repair the disaster.

"Come to this window," said Mrs. Smith to Harriet; "they're just at the door. Talk of——"

"Oh! don't—now *isn't* he handsome!"

"That's a new-fashioned overcoat," said Miss Martin; "see how oddly the seams are closed. Have you seen one like it before?"

The ladies were not so observant as Miss Martin of the gentleman's apparel; but they all saw Mrs. Jackson lifted from the sleigh, and almost carried into the house.

This, certainly, seemed an unnecessary piece of devotedness

to all present, and they came to the conclusion that, whatever doubt had existed before, there was certainly none now with regard to their positive engagement.

"It's not every one that's so easily consoled," said Mrs. Folger, as they once more readjusted the quilt; "though I have heard of people who were married within a year. Mr. Alger, you know; it was only six months after his wife died."

Mrs. Smith winced a little, but did not betray her uneasiness. Her second wedding-day had occurred just nine months from the first day of her widowhood.

"By the way," said Miss Martin, suddenly, "who *do* you think I saw to-day, Harriet?—Adeline Mitchell, *your particular friend*," for all present were aware of the new antagonism.

"Ah!" said Harriet, with a most contemptuous wreathing of her thin lips.

"Yes; and she had on the sweetest new silk dress. I wonder who made it!"

"It's likely that people who can afford new silk dresses every fall, have them made in New York. I *do* like to see people get above themselves now and then!"

There was plainly no hope that the "breach of peace" could ever be closed. Adeline Mitchell's extravagance created quite a diversion from Mrs. Jackson. Miss Martin stitched away industriously with terribly long "needlefulls" of thread. Mrs. Folger now and then had a little chase for the unfortunate thimble, and Mrs. Smith, as usual, talked a great deal and sewed very little. As the days were very short, lights were introduced soon after Miss Martin's arrival, when a new difficulty ensued.

There were but two flat-bottomed candlesticks in the house; these Hannah had that morning rescued from the threatened

oblivion of the "closet under the stairs," and had spent much time and labour in polishing. Two lights were not sufficient, and the expedient of a lamp set upon a large plate was mentioned. The plate would not do, there was too much danger of its upsetting.

At length, Miss Martin suggested that the little tea-tray would be just the thing; and this, when tried, was found to answer admirably.

"Now, Harriet, I'll take your place, and you give us a tune. I haven't heard a bit of music this age. Do you know a piece called 'Flow Gently, Sweet Afton?'" asked Mrs. Smith.

"I haven't played it I can't tell the time when," responded the fair musician; "but I've got a beautiful new thing called Norma," she added, taking up a simple arrangement of the Druid's march in that celebrated opera.

"Norma!—I suppose that's a girl's name," said Mrs. Folger, complacently.

"Well, let's have that, then," continued Miss Martin.

Harriet forthwith commenced in a loud, dashing style, in which *forte* and *piano*, *diminuendo* and *crescendo* passages were so mingled, as to be entirely undistinguishable.

Mrs. Folger nodded her head to keep time, while Mrs. Smith, glad of an excuse for open idleness, laid down her needle and rested her elbow on the quilt-frame to listen, while Miss Martin's notes of admiration, as "Ain't that a sweet strain?"—"Don't that put you in mind of 'Bonaparte crossing the Rhine?'" were continued at intervals.

Animated by such "distinguished applause," Harriet played still more loudly as she neared the conclusion; but alas for the *finale*!

The twins, favoured by the noise, and animated by a purely feminine instinct, discovered that under the quilt was a capital place for playing "keep house," and had accordingly emigrated thither from the window-seat, where they had formerly resided. As they crept carefully under the opposite side, they were, at first, undiscovered; but growing more venturesome, Susan, who was a little the tallest, tried if she could "stand up straight" under the centre of the quilt.

Most unfortunate undertaking!—for, her head came in contact with the tea-tray; the lamp which it bore was upset; and, at the same moment, her sister, in trying to move one of the supporting chairs, brought the whole establishment once more to the carpet.

Harriet sprang from the piano, and snatched the lamps; one of the heavy candlesticks struck Sarah Ann in its descent; while Susan, completely enveloped, thought she was smothering in the centre of the quilt, and screamed in harmony. Of course, for a moment or two, there was total darkness, and when Hannah opened the door to announce tea, the whole room was a scene of unprecedented confusion.

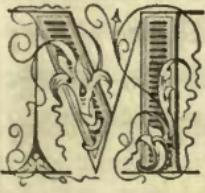
CHAPTER II.

The world's charity, and the world's condemnation !

Maiden Aunt.

He never left a single shilling,
His widow to console.

Bedott Papers.

RS. SMITH was a member of the Congregational church, which numbered but a few. The Episcopalians were the *aristocrats* of the town, at least, they were so called by all the rest, though the Presbyterians had the finest church, and the highest steeple; and the organ in the Lutheran church was far the best. The Congregationalists, therefore, came some way behind, and numbered but three wealthy men in their society; though Elder Whiting was a man of great influence, and Deacon Morrison would have been if he could. However, Mr. Townsend found his time and patience fully taxed to keep his congregation in order, small as it was; and his wife did much to assist him by her gentle and popular manners, and great tact—that woman's talent.

It was in the afternoon after Mrs. Harden's quilting, Miss Martin had commenced an engagement of three days at Mrs. Smith's, and the two ladies were deep in the mysteries of "ripping and turning." Suddenly a knock at the front door startled them, and Mrs. Smith hurried into an adjoining room to give a few preliminary instructions to the girl, who was going through the hall.

"If it's Miss Barnard," said Mrs. Smith, "show her into the parlour and roll up the curtains; tell her I'll be in in a second. However, it may be only Mrs. Morrison, and she may come right into the sitting-room—I won't change my cap for her. Oh! and Susan, if it's old Mrs. Shoefelt, just tell her I've run out, and you don't know when I'll be in. I did run out of the sitting-room," said the conscientious lady, as she applied her ear to the key-hole.

Now, it so chanced, that the visitor was neither of the above mentioned ladies, and Susan was at a loss how to dispose of her; but not noticing the girl's hesitation, and seeing the sitting-room door ajar, Mrs. Townsend solved the difficulty by walking directly in, as she heard Mrs. Smith was at home.

Miss Martin rose, in a flutter of consequence, to see her. "Mrs. Smith would be in in half a minute;—would Mrs. Townsend be so good as to excuse the looks of the room. Dress-makers made so many 'chips,' but it was 'clean dirt,' after all.

Mrs. Townsend smiled very kindly, and replied—"We all know what dressmaking is," and then hoped that she had not interrupted them as Mrs. Smith entered the room.

That lady was all smiles and cordiality. Again and again her visitor was urged to stay to tea, at least to take off her bonnet and sit an hour or two; but, after repeated refusals, the conversation took another turn.

"I suppose you're out making calls, then?" said Miss Martin, affably. Miss Martin was also one of Mr. Townsend's charge, and consequently took the visit partly to herself.

"Yes," was the reply, "I have just come from Mrs. Jackson's."

"Now, do tell me," said Mrs. Smith, "what's *your* opinion

about that match? Do you think they'll be married before the year's up?"

"May I ask what match? I confess to a lamentable ignorance of the news of the day."

"Why Mrs. Jackson and her husband's brother, of course," replied Mrs. Smith. "I suppose you know they are engaged?"

"Mrs. Jackson!" said her visitor, with a start of unfeigned astonishment. "Did I understand you, Mrs. Smith?"

"Why where do you live, not to hear the news? I thought every one knew how devoted he had been to her, from the day she was a widow. He's been up three times from New York, and every time he comes they ride out together, and are gone all the forenoon."

"Besides, she's leaving off her mourning," added Miss Martin. "I saw her in the street last week without her veil, and she had on a mouseline-de-laine dress with white stripes in it. As to that, however, she might just as well not have worn any veil at all, for she never has it over her face. If people put on mourning, I don't like to see it done half-way. Good deep crape and bombazine, say I, if any one's going in black for a near friend, not to say husband."

"Yes," said Mrs. Smith, "I remember that I wore a double crape veil till the very Sunday before I was married to Mr. Smith. I really felt sorry to take off black at all, it was so becoming. Everybody told me I never looked so well in the world."

Mrs. Townsend could scarcely repress a smile at this remarkably *naïve* confession, but said, quite earnestly—"I see nothing particular in Mr. Edward Jackson's attentions; I am sure I should expect the same kindness from my husband's brother,

were I similarly situated. She has no other person to consult in her business."

"Well, there it is again. It was such a queer move for her to go on with that factory. In the first place, it's all covetousness on her part; she wants to be a rich young widow, I suppose. Though, as for being young, she never will see thirty again to *my* knowledge. Then the men all admire her 'spirit' so much, and she knew it beforehand. It serves to make her talked about." Mrs. Smith delivered these opinions oracularly, and Miss Martin joined in with—

"I should a thought Mrs. Jorden might have afforded to have stayed the winter with her sister, at least. Flying here, and flying off again before ever any of us had a chance to see her; but it's all of a piece with the whole family—they're just as selfish, and just as close as they can be. If it wasn't for Jane, Mrs. Jackson's girl, we never should know what was going on."

"By the by, Jane says," continued Mrs. Smith, "that Mr. Edward Jackson always kisses her when he comes and goes, and that her little boy already calls him 'pa.' Of course, it's nothing to me; but I do like to see people behave themselves, and they might have waited till Mr. Jackson's grave-stone was up, to say the least."

Mrs. Townsend was truly shocked at the coarseness of the last remark; but she had waited for a pause in the conversation to suggest an explanation of Marian's absence.

"Mrs. Jackson was speaking of her sister's health this afternoon. She is very much alarmed about her. Of course, you know how delicate she has been this winter, and that her physician said he could not answer for the consequences if she stayed north."

"You don't say!" ejaculated Miss Martin; "why I always thought she looked well enough. Wouldn't it be queer if Henry Jorden should be left a widower? I wonder who he'd marry!"

"I don't suppose he has thought so far as that," replied Mrs. Townsend, smiling, despite the seriousness of the subject, at the last characteristic remark. "But, as regards Mrs. Jorden, it was only by absolute necessity that she was prevailed to leave her sister this winter. I fear Mrs. Jackson will be, and has been, very lonely."

"La! I don't see why. There's Jane, one of the best girls in the kitchen I *ever* saw—she lived with me awhile—and Mrs. Miller's very neighbourly. Besides, she doesn't shut herself up, by any means, not she; for young Dr. Wheelock has been there often, and lawyer McCloud, and she goes out to tea every now and then. She was at Miss Barnard's last week, quite as if nothing had happened, and sung and played, too, though she don't keep her own piano shut, as to that."

"Just so, Mrs. Smith," said Miss Martin. "I was saying to Mrs. Folger the other night—last night it was, at Mrs. Harden's—Mrs. Folger, says I, when people forget their husbands so soon, (and the best of husbands as *he* was,) begin to take off black when they haven't worn the stiffness out of the crape, and can sing songs just as if they didn't mind being widows a bit, *I haven't got much pity for them*, that's all."

"I never shall forget," pursued Mrs. Smith, "how cool she was the day of the funeral. I don't believe she shed a tear. I'm sure, the day *my* first husband was buried, it was just as much as they could do to get me into the carriage. Ma said she never saw anybody go on as I did. But I had reason to feel bad. A kinder man never brought bread into the house than

Mr. Jenkins. He was *such* a provider. Wasn't it strange, Miss Martin, that he didn't leave a hundred dollars after all was paid off? We all thought the executors must have cheated me. I never will forgive Dr. Trueman as long as I live—never. Though I'm not a bit spiteful, naturally, and I wouldn't lift my hand against him. I ain't one of them kind."

Mrs. Townsend tried in vain for some time to turn the conversation. These gossiping details were painful to her, for she felt that, as a listener, she was becoming a party to them. Although she knew very little of Mrs. Jackson—the acquaintance having commenced accidentally on Mr. Townsend's having been called to officiate at Mr. Jackson's funeral, in the absence of their own clergyman,—she had conceived the deepest regard for her. She thought she understood fully Mrs. Jackson's motives in conducting her late husband's business affairs for the time, although no conversation on the subject had passed between them. Moreover, the absurdity of the charges made against her, put the affair in almost a ludicrous light, as she hastily reviewed it in her own mind.

"Ladies," said she, at the first pause in the tirade, "I came partly on business this afternoon. You have heard of course about the meeting of the committee of ladies with regard to establishing an orphan asylum."

"Mrs. Folger was speaking of it last night, don't you remember?" said Mrs. Smith, "and I thought we had orphans enough of our own to see to, without gathering up all the little beggars in town, and washing their faces for them. Besides, if the Bernards and Seymours and that Mrs. Jackson are going to have it all in their own hands, let them manage it among themselves. I wouldn't go a step out of my way to help them. Would you, Miss Martin?"

The lady thus appealed to thought not; no, decidedly.

The key of the indignation was this. Mrs. Smith was affronted that she had not been called upon at first; Mrs. Harden had been, Mrs. Folger was, one of the original committee. She "did n't see why she was n't as good as other people!"

Mrs. Townsend tried in vain to soothe her; Mrs. Smith was one of those obstinately jealous people who are always imagining affronts where none are intended, and who are never willing to be convinced that they, by any possibility, can be wrong. She had determined from the first to do all that she could against the new movement, which in itself was truly praiseworthy, and was glad of an opportunity to vent the ill-humour that had been slowly gathering, like an autumnal storm, for many days.

Finding her remonstrances only increased the belligerent determination of the lady, Mrs. Townsend soon after took leave, after engaging Miss Martin to sew a day for her the ensuing week.

No sooner had the hall door closed, than Mrs. Smith began commenting on the extravagance of ministers' wives generally, and Mrs. Townsend in particular.

"Now you just see," said she, stitching vigorously the seam of a sleeve, "if there is not more sugar used in that house in one week than there is in mine for a month. I wonder what sort of a dress it is she wants you to make."

"A silk, she said."

"Another new silk dress! Why she had one only a year ago, that cheeny with so many colours in it. I do hate to see *my own money* wasted in that way. Twelve dollars a year for pew rent is something taken out of a family now-a-days, I can tell you. Particularly when flour's eight dollars a barrel. Speak-

ing of that, Morrison has got some of the *cheapest* groceries I ever saw. His six cent sugar is quite good enough, when there's no one in, and as for using Havana in our own family, I won't do that for anybody."

CHAPTER III.

"A whisper woke the air,
A soft light tone and low,
Yet barbed with shame and woe.
Low as it seemed to others' ears
It came a thunder crash to her."

Mrs. Osgood.

 THAT very afternoon Mrs. Jackson sat alone by her own fire-side. *Alone*, in the fullest meaning of that desolate word. Her brother had left that morning for New York, and the reaction from the little excitement of his visit, had increased her sadness. Besides, the day before she had passed with him at the manufactory, in consultation with Mr. Stone the overseer, and she had looked over memorandams written in that well-known hand, sitting at the very desk that had been her husband's, and had listened to his praises from the grateful operatives, who crowded at the noon hour, to welcome her.

She thought over all of this, and the tears came to her eyes. She looked around that little room where there were still so many tokens of him, and recalled the pleasant smile, and tried to catch the very tone of his nightly greeting. "Gone, and for ever, from my yearning sight," was the language in her heart as she wept bit-

terly. Archie had gone out with Jane, and there was nothing to prevent the indulgence of this sorrow. It was not often that the fountain of bitterness welled forth, but now she did not seek to check it; she drew his last kind letters from their resting-place, and read again and again those words of deep and manly affection, that had thrilled her heart with delicious happiness when she had first received them, but were now doubly dear, as she remembered they were the last tokens of that love that should ever be hers.

Even those, then speaking so harshly, would have stayed their reproaches could they have seen the weary woman kneeling in very sickness of heart, with her head buried in the cushions of the sofa, and yielding to wild bursts of grief, that sank at times to a low, moaning sob, still more fearful! Yet some there were, even at that hour, who envied her! Envied her beauty, her intelligence, and her worldly position, and spoke of her future prospects as unclouded!

Scarcely had she recovered from this unusual excitement, when the step of a visitor sounded in the hall. In an instant those dear records of the dead, blistered as they were with tears, were hastily put aside; she did not enter the room until the flush had somewhat subsided from her eyelids, and then as she greeted her visitor with cheerful cordiality, none but a heart tremblingly alive to her welfare, could have marked the traces of that fearful storm of emotion.

Mrs. Miller's manner was in marked contrast to this warm greeting. She was cold and embarrassed, spoke in short sentences, which were often broken off, as if they had at first contained the element of some second thought it was best not to speak — a peculiarly "tantalizing" mode of remark, in which

many ladies are so prone to indulge. Mrs. Jackson could not understand this, but not dreaming that she had contributed to her friend's wayward humour, did not appear to notice it. The object of Mrs. Miller's call, to solicit attendance at a second meeting with regard to the orphan asylum, was soon dispatched, and, depressed as she had been, it was with feelings almost like pleasure that Mrs. Jackson saw her visitor depart.

She rose the ensuing morning with a dull headache, the effect of the indulgence of her grief the previous evening, and had the meeting been for any other purpose, she would have declined attendance. But the thought of her own fair child, who might one day be orphaned, quickened her sympathy, and she resolved to do all in her power to aid in securing a comfortable home for the little unfortunates, who had none to care for them.

The ladies met at Mrs. Miller's, and had nearly all arrived when she entered the room. She fancied that they bowed coldly, and it was true that none of them offered to make room for her, although almost every seat was occupied, until Mrs. Townsend chanced to notice her momentary hesitation, and drew an ottoman from an adjoining recess. Miss Seymour pertly inquired when Mr. Edward Jackson would be up again. Mrs. McCloud, on the other side, asked when she had seen Dr. Wheelock last, and though Mrs. Jackson replied courteously, she could not comprehend the reason why both ladies emphasized their questions, and smiled superciliously at her quiet replies.

The business of the meeting commenced, only once did Mrs. Jackson make a suggestion, for despite her resolutions to the contrary, this courtesy had shaded her spirits. Her remark on the disposition of the funds already collected, was perhaps the most sensible arrangement offered; but before Mrs. Townsend

could speak in its support, Miss Seymour had proposed a contrary plan, which Mrs. Miller instantly adopted.

"Surely," thought Mrs. Jackson, as she walked home alone, "I cannot have done any thing to offend all these people. It must be a sickly fancy;" and she smiled at what she termed her foolish sensitiveness.

But day after day this neglect became more marked. Many who had before sought her society passed her with a cold bow in the street. Her visitors became more rare, and gradually a terrible depression stole over her. She tried in vain to solve the secret of this change. She could not tax herself with any fault, and after a month in which she had constantly been wounded, she resolved to overcome her reserve and question Mrs. Miller, the next time they should meet. It so chanced that in the afternoon she was detained at Dr. Van Blake's, the dentist of Rivertown, and, while waiting, could not avoid hearing the conversation of two ladies seated in the adjoining parlour, the door being partially open. Her own name at first attracted her attention, and she recognised the voice of Mrs. Miller, as she said,

"Why, Mrs. Jackson, to be sure."

"Indeed, I thought she was a particular friend of yours," was the rejoinder.

"So she was, as long as she conducted herself properly; but when a woman is so imprudent as to have the whole town talking about her, of course *I* cannot countenance such conduct."

Mrs. Jackson heard no more; the words rang in upon her brain with a leaden sense of suffering such as she had felt the first morning on which she awoke to the loneliness of widowhood. She gasped for breath as she rose up mechanically and went out into the street. She saw no one as she hurried to her home,—

she gathered her veil tightly over her face and started at every footstep near her. A whirl of contending thoughts was in her mind, and for the moment she almost forgot that she was innocent: and saw already the finger of scorn pointed at her approach.

Her eyes fell upon the portrait of her husband as she entered the house. Then came a revulsion of pride. "That they should *dare* to speak so of *his wife!*" she said gaspingly, as she clenched her hands until the blood seemed oozing through the slender fingers. What could have been her fault! How had she brought detraction to increase her sorrow? In vain she reviewed each act of the past few months, her struggles with loneliness and despondency, her exertions for the good of others, her close application to business, and her busy schemes for its success. What of all this could have been misinterpreted? Conscience did not reproach her, yet even as she struggled against the feeling, it was as if she clasped a poisoned arrow to her heart when she slept that night, her pillow wet with agonizing tears.

CHAPTER IV.

'T is not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
 Nor customary suits of solemn black,
 Nor windy suspirations of forced breath,
 No, nor the fruitful river of the eye,
 Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
 Together with all forms, modes, shows of grief,
 That can denote me truly; these indeed seem,
 For they are actions that a man might play;
 But I have that within, which passeth show;
 These, but the trappings and the suits of woe.

HAMLET.

"These thoughts have made me strong to check
 The bitterness of grief,
 Have nerved my heart to bear the pangs
 That time brings no relief,—
 Yet I am censured, that my love
 For thee hath been so brief.
 So brief! ah well! I only ask
 They may not have to bear
 One half the loneliness I know
 One *tithe* of my despair!"



OR a week she saw no one. She could not overcome the sickening thoughts that crowded upon her at the sound of a familiar voice. The duties of the day she passed through mechanically, and those performed, she would lie upon the sofa for hours in a dull, yet harassing reverie. One evening as she thus indulged a moody sorrow, she thought suddenly of Mrs. Townsend; true she was not an old acquaintance, and though she shrank from hearing those hateful details, she knew that Mrs. Townsend must have heard all, and would tell her gently their import.

She was right, for no one would have approached more gently,

"Tell me," said Mrs. Jackson, the instant she could speak after Mrs. Townsend's arrival,—for she had despatched a message to her, ere she slept—"tell me, what do all these stories mean? How have I transgressed the laws of propriety? You must have heard all: of what do they accuse me?"

Mrs. Townsend was at first slightly embarrassed, but she thought it best after a moment's reflection to tell the principal reports, and as carefully as possible spoke of that with regard to Mr. Edward Jackson, and said that Dr. Wheelock's visits had been commented on by Miss Seymour, who was suspected of a *penchant* for the doctor herself. The last suggested its own rise at once, and Mrs. Townsend passed over it lightly, interrupted only by Mrs. Jackson's explanation of Archie's constant and irritating illness, of the past two months, and Dr. Wheelock's kind attention;—Archie having taken one of those unaccountable childish dislikes to their family physician, Dr. Chester.

At the first Mrs. Jackson was too indignant for words, but at length spoke almost angrily in reply.

"I have known Edward from my childhood," said she. "He was my friend and counsellor, ay, brother, long ere I became a wife! To whom should I turn but to him?"

"It is perfectly natural, I own," replied Mrs. Townsend, "and I have never blamed you in the least. But perhaps you might have been a little more cautious. His lifting you into the sleigh the last time he was here?"

"I had strained my ankle severely, but that very morning, and if you recollect could scarcely walk as far as Mrs. Miller's two days afterwards."

"Yes, I do remember it well," continued Mrs. Townsend. "Your long rides are another ground of comment."

"Our long rides? I have never been farther than the factory with him!"

"Ah, that is it, they of course only judge by the length of your absence. His frequent visits, I can imagine necessary to the arrangement of your business, and allow me to say, though you may consider it an intrusion, Mrs. Jackson, that both my husband and myself approve and commend your unusual exertions."

Mrs. Jackson smiled gratefully through her tears.

"What do they call forgetting," said she, as they once more returned to the principal charge made against her, "if it is to think of him by day, and dream of him by night; if it is making his slightest wish my rule of action, trying to imitate his virtues, and avoiding all that he has disapproved of, believing or at least hoping, that he is permitted even now to watch over me, and appealing to him in thought whenever I am troubled, teaching my boy to revere his memory, and training him to take his place; if this be forgetfulness, then am I indeed at fault. I may not wear a widow's veil, but I have a widowed heart. My dress may not be of the deepest hue, but my sorrow is not regulated by it! Life is too earnest with me to dwell constantly upon the past, and I hold it to be a fearful sin when one rebels madly against the decrees of our Heavenly Father. I am sure *you* do not misunderstand this"—and she felt it was so, as she saw the eyes that sought her own heavy with tears.

Those who have seen how bravely Mrs. Jackson had borne her earlier trials, may wonder that this idle gossip so distressed her. But strange as it may seem, her husband's death had been endured with twice the fortitude. She had been so secure in conscious innocence, and had cherished the memory of her husband

so truly, that she had not dreamed any one could for an instant think that she did not love him.

"I have no patience with these gossiping people," said Mrs. Townsend, as she recounted her visit to her husband that evening. "They have caused Mrs. Jackson more pain, I verily believe, than she had borne before. One cannot help caring for these things and dwelling on them, though you know they are slanders. It's well enough to say 'don't mind it,' but when one is left alone among strangers as she is, they are enough to bear without added misery. I am convinced and have been from the first, that neither she nor Mr. Edward Jackson ever dreamed of marriage, yet these people will not rest until they worry her into an illness, at least."

"Nay, Louisa," said her husband, gently, "you must not speak harshly in your turn. Mrs. Jackson can never be alone while she trusts in Providence with such earnest, unquestioning faith, and censure may prove the finer's fire to her noble character. The purest gold you must recollect is submitted to the fiercest furnace."

"A fiercer than Mrs. Smith's tongue could scarcely be found. Poor Mrs. Jackson! I left her a little comforted, and I know she will try to stem the torrent bravely, now that she understands its force."

And Mrs. Townsend was right, though many were the fearful struggles which Mrs. Jackson passed through, and often her very heart failed her. Again and again did she pray "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me," and at last her petition was granted. More than one friend, truly so, though swayed for a time by popular opinion, begged forgiveness, which was kindly accorded, and the petty slanders were quietly but triumphantly

refuted. But Mrs. Harden never could be made to believe that she would not marry Mr. Edward Jackson, until that gentleman brought his pretty and accomplished bride to pass a week with his sister, the ensuing spring.

Even then she remarked that she knew Mrs. Jackson was disappointed, and it had served her right; to which observation Mrs. Smith and Harriet responded fervently.

S K E T C H T H E F I F T H .

M A L E G O S S I P S .

C H A P T E R I .

“She gave up all to share his fate,
And now her presence makes the light
That sunshine of his quiet home,
That else were desolate.”



HE description given by Mr. Edward Jackson, of Mr. Townsend, the pastor of the Congregationalist Church, was—“a tall, sad-looking man, who seemed to have learned sympathy through sorrow.”

This last remark conveyed the impression made on almost every one, when he first came among them. He was always pale, as if from midnight watchings, and his large dark eyes at times seemed filled with an expression of unutterable sorrow. Yet he was so gentle that the smallest child in his congregation ran to meet him, looking up into his face with confiding love; and were

any in affliction or distress, no one could suggest more hopeful words of consolation. He was always grave in manner, yet when he smiled, a beautiful light illumined his whole countenance, giving it that expression which some of the old masters have delighted to portray in pictures of "the beloved disciple." Indeed, "Aunt Underwood," one of the oldest among his charge, often said she was sure "the Apostle John must have looked just like her pastor; and it was no wonder if he did—that the Master had loved him better than all the rest."

His wife was not unlike him in gentleness and forbearance, but her manner was entirely different. She had been the petted, only child of fond parents, who wondered, as did all her friends, at her acceptance of Mr. Townsend, when wealthy and distinguished men at the same time sought her love. She had never been allowed one act of self-denial, for her wishes were anticipated from her cradle, and now she laid aside the gaiety and idleness of her luxurious life, to become the sharer in the humble fortunes of the pastor of a village church.

They had first met in the saloons of fashion, where the young lawyer so rapidly rising in his profession, and the beautiful heiress, Louise Warner, were the observed of many eyes. But though it was only natural that mutual admiration should result in deep regard, no one dreamed that this would still continue when "Townsend had become a mad religious enthusiast"—so said his gayer friends—and avowed his intention of forsaking the paths of wealth and ambition, for that lowlier way which his Master had through suffering trod.

Her parents argued and even pleaded in vain. Her duty to them would not admit that she should marry without their consent, yet she declared her intention of holding sacred the vows

she had plighted to one whom she truly esteemed. When they saw that this resolution did not arise from a girlish sentimentality, but from a sincere conviction of duty and an entire change in her hitherto thoughtless character, opposition ceased.

"Let the child be happy in her own way," said her father; and so they were united, and the fashionable world wondered, pitied them, and as soon forgot even their existence.

None of their church to whom he came as a friend and a guide, knew of the self-denial Mr. Townsend had already practised, or how different was the quiet, humble life they now led, from that to which they had been accustomed. Rumours that Mrs. Townsend's family were wealthy, had, indeed, been borne to River-town; but the inhabitants decided it could not be true, when they saw how plainly she dressed and how studiously she avoided anything like display. True she had a piano, and for a long time some of the more rigid seemed disposed to consider it an unpardonable sin. Mrs. Townsend was a fine musician, and did not feel herself called upon to close her instrument for ever, or silence the brilliant voice on whose cultivation so much care had been bestowed. Surely those are "righteous overmuch" who would deny us the most exquisite and the purest of earthly pleasures—"the only one," says Horace Walpole, "we are sure of enjoying still in Heaven!" So thought Mrs. Townsend, and so said her husband, as, after the day's weary duties were ended, he listened to the choral strains which Handel and Haydn have left to keep their memory for ever in the hearts of men.

"We fall on our knees with Mozart and rise on wings with Handel," says a beautiful writer; and who among us has not felt a thrill of purest and most rapturous devotion when listening to the organ's melting, surging strains, as well as the grander

harmony of Nature in the pathless forest or beside the heaving ocean?

It may excite wonder that with the dearest wish of his heart fulfilled, and faithfully discharging the duties of his calling, Mr. Townsend "should wear even at times a look of such profound sorrow. He would sit for hours without speaking, as if wrapped in painful thought; and when suddenly aroused from these moods, you might have noticed a wild expression dart from those mournful eyes, as if regretting a return to actual life. This, however, he seemed to struggle against, and his young wife assisted him to do so by every gentle and winning attention, and by a never-failing cheerfulness. Some one who had first noticed this despondency in their pastor, remarked, also, the look of grateful love with which he grasped his wife's hand as it left him, and whispered, "Dearest Louise, you are indeed my guardian angel."

They had two children at the time Mrs. Jackson first made their acquaintance, and Archie was soon the playmate of Henry Townsend, and joined with him in a wondering admiration of his baby sister's first attempts to say "mamma."

Mrs. Jackson saw with regret that Mr. Townsend's sad moments seemed to increase. He was not so guarded as formerly, and would often fall into these moody abstractions while she conversed with his wife, and the children played merrily together. Sometimes he sighed, so long and so deeply that they both looked up involuntarily; and then Mrs. Townsend would struggle for an instant as if with hidden pain, and again enter into conversation as if nothing had occurred.

A casual observer would have thought some gloomy remorse was preying upon his heart, and at last Mrs. Jackson came to a

similar conclusion, and regretted that a morbid conscientiousness should lead him to sorrow so deeply over a fault that he must long ago have repented of, however dark or criminal it might have been. Mrs. Townsend never alluded to this peculiarity in her husband's conduct, and Mrs. Jackson felt that she had no right to intrude upon her confidence, although within the last year they had become intimate and steadfast friends.

CHAPTER II.

"Men said his brain was overcharged with thought.
The blue veins branched distinctly on his temples;
His lips had lost their fullness, and his blood
Fled with hot haste unsummoned to his brow.
He had grown captious, difficult, unlike
His former self."

EDITH MAY.

HE morning services were concluded. The day was oppressively warm, though it was yet early in the spring, and extempore fans, in the shape of pocket-handkerchiefs and hymn-book covers, had been actively in motion throughout the sermon. Mr. Townsend looked even paler than usual when he descended from the pulpit, and stood in the centre aisle to speak with Deacon Whiting, who awaited him there. Placing his hand kindly on the head of the little girl who clasped her father's hand, he stood for an instant in earnest conversation, and then passed on, with a kind word for Maggie as he left her.

Deacon Morrison bustled through the crowd still lingering in the vestibule, and inquired officiously for his health.

"I was telling wife to-day," said he, "that I should n't wonder if you had a long spell of sickness, you've looked so pale lately, and seemed so absent-minded—a brain-fever, or something of that sort," he added, consolingly.

A look of pain shot over the listener's face, but he said, "The weather has been so oppressive the past week, that it has unnerved me; particularly, as I have had many visits to pay, and several funerals to attend in the country. How are all your family?"—and Mr. Townsend made a movement to go forward.

"Well as common, I believe," was the reply; and Deacon Morrison stepped into a vacant place nearer the door, as if to bar the progress of his pastor.

There was a little quickness in the bow and farewell that followed, for Mr. Townsend seemed anxious not to be detained; and with a look of disappointment, Deacon Morrison turned to Mr. Whiting, and placing his arm familiarly in that of his good neighbour, began to complain of the "rudeness" he had just experienced.

"I did not see anything like that," said Deacon Whiting. ("Run on to your mother, Maggie.) Had you anything particular to say?"

"Why no, not exactly; I only thought I'd ask his opinion about Widow Haynes being able to get along without help from the church, and whether he thought Aunt Underwood would live the summer out, and what they were likely to do with young Allen—whether the church would take any action or not on his going to the theatre and the Long Island races the last time he was in New York."

"I think you are mistaken about the last, John——"

"No, I ain't. James Farren was with him, and he told Har-

riet Harden, she told Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Smith told Miss Martin, and Miss Martin told me. Now, if that ain't straight, I don't know what is. But Mr. Townsend might have waited a minute, it seems to me."

"He was scarcely able to get through the sermon, John. I could see how his lips trembled, long before it was finished. And you held him here right in the hot sun. Then he's got to be in the Sunday School and preach this afternoon, besides the six o'clock prayer-meeting, and the sermon this evening. You surely would give him time to eat his dinner."

"As to the six o'clock prayer-meeting, he ain't obliged to come. It was my plan altogether, and I guess I'm able to lead. I knew how apt we were to let the mind run on other things just about sundown, when we can't read or anything, and I thought, particularly for the young people, 'twould be an excellent plan."

"Yes, particularly for those boys and girls who write notes to each other in the hymn-books, and turn all they have heard into ridicule going home together. See what I found in the blank leaf of my own Bible, I happened to leave in the conference room last Friday."

Mr. Whiting took a crumpled bit of paper, on which two different and equally ungraceful styles of chirography might be distinctly traced, reading as follows:—

"May I walk to meeting with you to-night?"

"Ma says I mus'n't go with you any more. Take care—Deacon Morrison's looking."

"I don't care if he is. Did you ever hear such a long-winded prayer? *Somebody* always looks so consequential, like the play—

'Here I sit and don't you see—
Don't you wish that you was me?'

"Oh gracious! don't!"

Deacon Morrison reddened as he finished the perusal of this precious MS.

"If I could find out who did that, I'd—I'd——"

"No, you wouldn't do anything, neighbour Morrison, because you couldn't. I wouldn't have shown it to you, only I never did like the idea of those prayer-meetings, and I wanted to let you see they do more harm than good. Besides, it don't allow us one minute in the day to 'commune with our own hearts and be still,' as we are told to."

"Well, well," said Mr. Morrison, "every one's not gifted alike—my talent's for prayer and your'n for meditation, I suppose. But don't you think Mr. Townsend acts very strangely now-a-days?"

"I had not noticed anything, only that he did not look well."

"That's just it; I've heard more than one wonder what it could be. Sometimes he's all fire and animation, then again he's so low-spirited you can't get a word out of him."

"We all have our ups and downs, John, and I'm afraid Mr. Townsend has too much care and labour upon him."

"He hard worked! Why, a minister don't know nothing about getting tired. What does he have to do but set there at home in his comfortable study, as he calls it, and write a little—maybe a sermon or two a week?"

"We defined a part of his labours just now. Our day of rest is the most wearisome of all the week to him. Then he has to visit among all of us. You know how hurt some feel if they don't see him at least once a month. Then there's funerals to

attend, and he often goes miles into the country for that. And sermon-writing might be easy to *you*, but I'd rather stand behind the counter or overlook apprentices from morning till night than write two sermons any week."

"You're always so unreasonable, Deacon Whiting; you're always defending everybody that's wrong. For my part, I haven't got so much charity for the whole world, and I'm willing to confess it. I've watched our minister a long time, and I've made up my mind about his case. I've been intending to speak to you, and I might as well out with it. It's as clear as daylight to me—*he drinks!*"

"Oh, John, what have you said! Take care, I beg of you. For the sake of the church, and of every one, never say that again."

"The truth's the truth, and we've all a right to speak it."

"Wait until you are sure it *is* the truth before you accuse a man—and that man your own minister—of such a thing."

"Well, I'll prove it to you," said the other, doggedly, withdrawing his arm, as they had arrived at Deacon Whiting's house.

"Promise me that you will not speak to any one else about it until you have done so."

The good man rested his hand on the door-knob and looked imploringly into Mr. Morrison's face. He was inexpressibly shocked at what he had just heard.

"I never make no promises," was the reply, as the other hurried away.

Portraits of the two might be sketched in a few words, but we take pleasure in recalling the excellencies of the elder of the colloquists. He was not much over fifty, but his hair was white and his face was furrowed, showing that he had not escaped his

share of life's grief and disappointment. The kindest of husbands and fathers, quoted by all who knew him as the most upright and honourable merchant in the place, a friend to the poor, and a guardian to the fatherless and the widow, more than one spoke his name with blessings. Many thought it strange that he had not become wealthy, for customers were never wanting at his counter—a steady and sure businsss had been under his control for years. Those, however, who knew his unceasing acts of benevolence, who recollect that he was the Gaius of the church, entertaining all strangers hospitably, often offering a home for weeks to their new pastors, however numerous the family; and moreover, that as church treasurer he had more than once supplied the deficiency of the year's receipts from his own purse—those who recalled these things wondered not that close economy was necessary in the expenses of his own large family. Sometimes hasty in rebuke, but never intentionally unkind, he was loved by all his associates, and almost reverenced by the younger members of the church; while every one agreed that he had “much treasure in Heaven.”

Mr. Morrison was in many things the reverse of this picture. How he had ever obtained the office of deacon was a wonder to those who knew him best. He was fitted for it neither by education nor piety, they said, and was many years younger than his coadjutor. He was jealous of the respect which Deacon Whiting received from the community at large, as well as in their own circle, and ambitious of a like popularity. “The balance of power” was a favourite theory with him, (though we question if he had even heard of the science of Political Economy,) but he liked the scales always to weigh heaviest on his side. At first he had been the trumpeter of Mr. Townsend's good deeds and

good qualities. The quiet opposition of that gentleman to his favourite scheme of six o'clock prayer-meeting had been the first ground of offence, and now he lost no opportunity to express his discontent and disapprobation openly.

CHAPTER III.

"Men in general may be divided into the inquisitive and the communicative.—In one particular, all men may be considered as belonging to the first grand division—inasmuch as they all seem equally desirous of discovering the mote in their neighbour's eye."—BIGELOW PAPERS.



HAT 'S the good word with you, this morning?" was the greeting of an acquaintance to Lawyer McCloud, as he strolled into that gentleman's office.

"Nothing particular," was the reply, as Mr. McCloud kicked a dusty Windsor chair towards his visitor without removing his thumbs from the arm-holes of his vest, in which they were carefully inserted.

"What's in 'The Republican?'"

"Haven't seen it, sir."

"Well, I suppose 'The Rivertown Gazette' has the most of the news. Speaking of news, have you heard what a row the Congregationalists have got into?"

"No. What about—property? Likely to end in a lawsuit?"

"Always an eye to the main chance, lawyer. 'T won't end in nothing, as I can see. They've got dissatisfied with their minister,

as usual, and are doing their best to be rid of him—at least, Deacon Morrison is."

"I did think they'd got somebody at last that they'd manage to keep. What's the ground of complaint now? Let's see—Mr. Ritchings they dismissed while he was away, without any particular cause at all. The sum and substance was, (I've always thought,) that his family was getting large, and they don't pay up very punctually. Next Mr. Lord, a single man—ought to live on a small salary, and all that; but it seems he paid too much attention to one deacon's daughter and too little to another's sister. Mr. Gibson didn't visit enough, and his wife had tea companies too often. You see, I remember all these things—though everybody in town knows their church matters, as to that."

"Poor Mr. Townsend! he's got the worst of it, neighbour McCloud. They actually declare the man drinks!"

"Pretty serious charge. Wish it was actionable—damages might be laid high. Ruins his reputation of course; and servant girls and ministers must depend on their characters for getting along."

"Lawyers do without any, don't they?" and the speaker chuckled—that long, low laugh, betokening all absence of care and a love for the good things of this life in general.

The lawyer smiled complacently at the worn-out joke, and the two subsided into a lengthened political discussion, "the tariff" and the "sub-treasury" movements then before Congress, being canvassed with a zeal that might have done some good could it have infected those to whom the decision had been entrusted.

By-the-way, it is scarcely a wonder that Harriet Martineau should say—"Americans seem to consider making politics the

end and aim of education." They pay men for making their laws, and not content with this, sit at home and abuse or glorify them, as the case may be, while they are doing so. The discussion of congressional politics is varied by a dip into local elections; they in turn give place to conventions for new nominations, and while hours and days are thus wasted, we ladies are abused for a study of the fashion plates and an indulgence in a little charming, purely feminine desire of looking as well as possible on the smallest means. Which ought, in candour, to be deemed the lesser waste of time?

By early autumn, the affair of Mr. Townsend's failing was the popular topic of discussion everywhere. Bar-room loungers spoke of it as an excellent example, as they tossed off innumerable "brandies and water." Frequenters of groceries (and stores are the popular gathering-places in Rivertown after the day's work is over) discussed the weakness of human nature as displayed in this particular instance, while they leaned languidly upon counters or beat an energetic tattoo against the flour-barrels serving as pedestals to their greatness. Many a one paused, in his eager demolition of pea-nuts, to add his mite of evidence; and the consumption of "honey-dew tobacco" was perceptibly diminished.

One thought it was a scandal to the cause of religion, and the church ought to go to work at once and make him an example. Another—who regarded all clergymen as a higher order of his own class, "loafer"—said he always knew the whole set were hypocrites, and only "took up preaching for a living because they were too lazy to do anything else;" and some few truly regretted that so vile a tale should gain any credence whatever.

Still no public cognizance of the subject had been taken. The rumour did not seem to have reached Mr. Townsend himself; as is often the case, the parties most concerned knew least about it; and still his amiable wife came as a spirit of good among his people, and their pastor was unusually eloquent when he addressed them from the pulpit.

The church had become divided into factions that were nearly equal in number. Some refused to believe one word of the charge, and others, headed by Deacon Morrison and stimulated by the active exertions of Mrs. Smith and Miss Martin, lost no opportunity of making converts to their side of the question. Even outward quiet could not long be maintained.

"What can I do?" said Deacon Whiting one evening to his matronly wife. "There's the whole church in a state of ferment, and none of them are willing to come out openly. I've thought over it, and I've prayed over it, and I don't know what is my duty. How can I go and tell that poor man how we have repaid his love and care?"

"Don't say *we*," interrupted Mrs. Whiting, indignantly.

"Well, some of us have, my dear; and some one must have corrupted the truth if there is no such fault on his part. He does act strangely sometimes, there's no doubt. There's some mystery somewhere, but on the whole, I incline to think it's best to call a special church meeting. What was it Miss Martin told you this afternoon?"

"Why, that sometimes he got so bad that he actually beat her. You know how thin the walls of those houses are, and their next-door neighbours have heard her cry in the middle of the night as if her heart would break. Then he walks out sometimes at twelve o'clock—and that's odd, to say the least. They have

heard her beg and beseech of him (Miss Martin says) not to go on so, but it seems to do little good."

"This is getting to be a serious business, mother," and the good man joined his hands behind him, thereby elevating his coat-skirts, and slowly promenaded the sitting-room. "Too bad—too bad!" he ejaculated, at last, stopping suddenly and pushing his spectacles to the top of his forehead, as he always did when anything perplexed him. Mrs. Whiting sighed, and applied herself still more industriously to darning an enormous basket-full of children's stockings.

CHAPTER IV.

"I drink the bitter cup!
I drink—for He whom angels did sustain
In the dread hour when mortal anguish met him,
When friends forgot and deadly foes beset him,
 Stands by to soothe my pain.
I drink—for thou, O God, preparedst the draught
Which to my lips thy Father-hand is pressing;
I know 'neath ills oft lurks the deepest blessing—
 Father, the cup is quaffed!"

MRS. C. M. SAWYER.



HE crisis came sooner than it had been looked for, and was brought about most unexpectedly. With all her apparent calmness, Mrs. Townsend had known for weeks what her friends had vainly endeavoured to hide. Miss Martin came first to condole with her, and when she found her still in ignorance, would have given full particulars, but Mrs. Townsend refused to listen, simply

saying, "Of course you denied the report as being without even a foundation." But Miss Martin was not silenced everywhere; and when she told Mrs. Smith of her visit, she added that in coming out she had met the girl on the very door-step with a flask of something, that, "if it wasn't brandy, it surely was n't spring-water," and the girl did not attempt to deny it. If that was not a foundation and something more, *she* could not tell what was. And Miss Martin made more converts than ever.

Mrs. Townsend never alluded to Miss Martin's visit, but now that she had a clue, the cause of the dissatisfaction which was very evident in the church, was no longer a mystery. She "pondered upon these things in her heart," and day by day she grew less hopeful that the aspersions would be cleared from her husband's character without his being made aware of their existence. Had she confided her trouble to some one, it would have been better in the end, for now she brooded over it, trying in vain to conjecture the rise of the new gossip, and forming vain plans to silence it.

One day she had been more sad than usual. A letter from her old home had pictured vividly the luxuries and enjoyments from which her own choice had for ever debarred her, and a strong temptation to repine at her present unhappiness had struggled with her better nature. Her children were both ill; she was weary with watching over their restless sleep, and withal, alarmed at the feverish symptoms which had appeared in Henry's short, quick breathing, and flushed cheek. She was thus ill-prepared to welcome her husband cheerfully from his round of pastoral visits, and started with alarm as he entered, looking pale and haggard, as if from recent and fearful mental emotion. She saw that concealment was no longer necessary, for the sigh, as he

took her hand, and the long, sad gaze he fastened upon her, told that he knew all.

"Then you have heard this terrible story, Louisa? You know that my labours were not accepted—that God has seen fit to put an end to my usefulness?"

"Do not say so, my love; I am sure the cloud will pass away! 'Tis but a trial sent for our good. Remember,

'Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face,'"

she said, trying to smile also as she spoke.

He drew her head down upon his shoulder, but he only said— "My poor wife—my poor Louisa."

This despondency did not last; the Christian triumphed, and they knelt together to pray that "all things might work together for good."

Mrs. Townsend did not know until weeks afterwards how suddenly and severely the blow had fallen. In visiting one of the poorest families connected with the church, Mr. Townsend had found the husband of his parishioner loading his shrinking wife with abuse, even threatening her with personal violence in his wild inebriation. Mr. Townsend thought it but right to remonstrate, and in return was told, in the coarsest language, "not to preach what he did not practise;" and on demanding an explanation, the wife related, with tears and assurances that she did not believe it, all that our readers have already heard.

"I told Deacon Morrison," said the poor woman, "I knew it was not true, whoever said it; but he came for William to do a job for him, and I didn't like to say much. William don't get work often."

Suspicion thus awakened, Mr. Townsend began to realize in its full extent the toils in which he was involved. He saw that the better part of the community watched him curiously; that the servant was daily subjected to cross-examinations on their family affairs, and more than once he was openly reminded that he had fallen under reproach. His wife tried to be cheerful, but her health and spirits had suffered. His own melancholy increased. There seemed to be a cloud between him and Heaven when he attempted to pray, and he shrank from instructing publicly those who evidently regarded him as a hypocrite. He consulted Deacon Whiting: the good man's troubled face told how earnest was his sympathy, as he urged a public denial of the charges.

Mr. Townsend shook his head mournfully. "I admit some of them," said he. "Louisa's unhappiness—my midnight walks—there has been some foundation, but I shrink from the explanation. Cannot it be put down quietly?"

"I fear not—I know it is impossible," was the reply; "it has gone so far and become so generally known."

The more Deacon Whiting thought over this conversation, the more he was puzzled. If Mr. Townsend had a clear conscience, why not come out openly at once? Yet dark as it was, Mr. Whiting still defended his minister, and would not admit even to himself that there was any fault to be imputed.

Many a sorrowful struggle shook the soul of the minister of God; he knew that by his silence he was bringing shame upon the church and the Master whom he served. Yet he shrank from having his disgrace publicly proclaimed, and quite as much from the only defence he could urge.

While thus meditating one evening, he received a summons

to attend a church council and defend himself against the charges made by a large portion of his congregation. Mrs. Townsend saw him compress his lips as the note was handed to him, and guessed its import.

"Tell them all," she said; "it is a morbid fear in which you have indulged. Ask God's assistance, His protection. We must leave this place and this people, but do not let a stain rest upon your name."

The evening appointed for the trial came. Mr. Townsend had passed the whole day alone in his study—no, not alone, for the shadow of a mighty Presence filled the room; and in this lofty communion the sorely-tried had found strength and consolation.

A light step crossed the threshold with the twilight, and the wife for whom he was that moment praying, stood beside him. A smile of gentle encouragement shone in her eyes as she fondly kissed his high white forehead, from which he had pushed back the masses of his dark hair.

"I feel this most for you, Louisa," he said, as he clasped her hand. "If your mother, your father should hear of the sorrow, the disgrace I have brought upon their idol, how could I answer them?"

"They never can hear of it, we are so remote from their circle. See"—and she held up a letter before him—"here is a long, kind message from mamma. I have not opened it yet; I have kept it to entertain me this evening, to sustain my spirits while you are absent. It would be sad, indeed, were they to learn what has passed."

She did not say more, but she knew that these parents would not easily overlook such a stain—so they would consider it—and

would regard with less allowance than ever a marriage to which they had yielded a reluctant consent.

The study grew quite dark as they sat there, neither speaking for some time. It was well that Mr. Townsend could not see the fearful traces of anxiety and illness in the languid expression that stole over his wife's face, and the effort she made to control her emotion that she might not unnerve him. Nor did he notice it when they parted, though the firelight revealed the long and earnest gaze with which she seemed to read his inmost thoughts. After he had left the house, a recollection of how strangely tender her last kiss had been, and how long she had clasped his hand, came over him with a fear of some undefined ill, and he turned to retrace his steps. "What a foolish thought," he half murmured, and once more hurried onward.

By Mr. Townsend's own request, every member of the church, male and female, had been invited to be present. The vestry, or conference room as it was oftener called, was nearly full, therefore, when he entered. He passed through their midst with a firm step, and took his usual seat confronting them all; yet when the light fell upon his face, Deacon Whiting, who sat at his right hand, instinctively filled a glass of water and offered it to him. The sad, sweet smile we have before spoken of, came to his face as he gently refused the proffered kindness, and more than one regarded it as an omen of returning peace to the church and happiness to him.

It was usual to commence all their meetings for business or otherwise, by reading a chapter from the Bible, and by an extempore prayer. Mr. Townsend rose, as his watch marked the appointed hour, and commenced reading the beautiful description of Charity found in St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. He

did not mean it as a rebuke to any, but he had been doubly impressed with its excellency of late, and it was for his own consolation that he had fixed upon it for the evening. More than one heart filled with compunction as his clear voice read—“*Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; charity envieth not ; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up ; doth not behave itself unseemly ; seeketh not her own ; is not easily provoked ; thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; bear- eth all things ; believeth all things ; hopeth all things ; endureth all things.*”

He paused for an instant, and then turning over the leaves rapidly, added a short passage from St. John’s earnest exhortation to the early Christians to “let brotherly love continue.” Deacon Whiting stole a glance towards his coadjutor, as these words were slowly enunciated—“*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren ; he that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*”

But if anything like consciousness of offence was written upon that self-complacent face, it was not seen by those around him.

The prayer that followed came from the depths of a suffering heart. All felt this as the earnest petition ascended to Heaven, and a fervent “amen” was breathed by Deacon Whiting at its concluding phrase—“let brotherly love continue.”

Mr. Townsend then made a short statement of the object of the meeting. “I have come before you to-night,” he said, “to vindicate myself as a man and a Christian, from charges which I believe untrue. But before I make my defence, I must first hear my accusation. I leave to Deacon Whiting the charge of this council, and shall consider myself as having no part in it until my time to speak arrives.”

Deacon Whiting glanced toward Mr. Morrison. "He cannot have the effrontery," thought he, "to accuse our minister, after that chapter and that prayer;" and when the other rose and prepared to speak, he more than half expected an humble apology. But his expectation was disappointed. In a speech of some half an hour's duration, remarkable neither for clearness nor elegance of language, Deacon Morrison, as the spokesman of his party, set forth the many complaints, that had grown from suspicions to positive assertions, of Mr. Townsend's habitual inebriety. Deacon Whiting interrupted the thread of his narrative now and then with some question or palliation of the statements made. The two pillars of the church were tacitly arrayed against each other, and more than once Deacon Whiting's indignant glances would have abashed one less dogged and self-complacent than the speaker.

"One or two "lesser lights" arose to confirm his statements, as they were successively called upon. These were men of the same stamp, ignorant and prejudiced, who were only too happy to find occasion for differing from Deacon Whiting. Miss Martin nodded her head as her statement was given, and Mrs. Smith stood up to signify her assent where she had been made authority.

The principal points in the evidence apart from what we have already mentioned, were Miss Martin's having seen Mr. Townsend walk to the dining-room closet, after having been very much agitated, and pour out a glassful of some liquid which he drank hastily; she had been sewing in the house at the time. Mrs. Smith had more than once seen Martha, Mrs. Townsend's servant, bring home a flask of brandy; Deacon Morrison had often conversed with Mr. Townsend "when he did not know what he

was about, and either did not answer at all, or else in a very queer kind of way."

It is not to be supposed that Mr. Townsend listened calmly to all this. Sometimes his emotion would be betrayed only in a nervous contraction of the features, and again he would half rise, as if to refute some charge indignantly, and then recollecting himself, sat down again and covered his face with his hands. Those in favour, sighed and shook their heads as Deacon Morrison glanced triumphantly around; but from the moment Mr. Townsend rose, all was changed. There was a proud and conscious innocence in the look he bent upon the late speaker, though his lips were ashen, and his voice at first low and tremulous.

After regretting that he should have been the cause of any disturbance in the peace that should be among them as brethren and sisters, he said that but for the reproach it had brought upon the church, he would have borne this evil-speaking in silence. That which he was now about to tell them had been unknown to him, until accident had revealed it, a few months after he came among them. He had been an orphan from earliest recollection, and, reared among strangers, had known little of his own family. The papers of his father had never come under his notice until some business arrangement made it necessary they should be placed in his hands. Then, to his horror, he found that the curse—it would seem such—of *hereditary insanity* had destroyed his father; and an elder brother, whose existence had been kept from him, had died not many years before, the inmate of a mad-house. His mother's friends had hoped that by carefully concealing this from him, and by a judicious mental training, the fearful entailment might be broken.

Since boyhood, even—he could scarcely account for it—he had

felt a peculiar horror of insanity. From the moment he made the discovery which he mentioned, it had preyed upon him, notwithstanding a continual struggle against it. For himself, it mattered little what suffering he was called on to undergo; but he never ceased to reproach himself that the happiness of others was now imperilled, and that his fair children might live to be included in the doom which he felt would sooner or later overtake him. Of his wife he could not trust himself to speak. They would never know how much she had renouned for his sake, or how courageously she had met this new sorrow. Sometimes when fears amounted almost to frenzy, and self-reproach became momentary madness, she had soothed him to the calmness he had sought in vain under the still heavens at midnight; and he had now learned for the first time, that in his absence she had yielded to violent grief.

Visitors might have seen him using a composing draught, which had become often necessary to his excited nervous system; and during the late illness of his oldest child, bathing in some alcoholic fluids had been recommended by Doctor Chester. That was probably the solution of the last charges, but of this he knew nothing.

Once more he alluded to his regret that his own sorrow should have occasioned dissension and wrong understanding among them, and that those who felt themselves aggrieved had not come at once to him for explanation. But he cast not the shadow of reproach on any one, save that once he looked sorrowfully towards his principal accuser. It was such a look as the Master might have given to his erring disciple, but it did not move the self-willed, stubborn man.

A murmur of surprise, indignation and compassion filled the

silence which followed this sadly eloquent appeal. More than one woman wept aloud, and men who had seen much sorrow forced back the starting tears.

Then they crowded around their pastor to express the sympathy all felt, and some humbly begged his forgiveness that they should have allowed themselves to be so deceived. Amid this movement, the principals of the opposite party disappeared. Deacon Morrison hurried away, that he might not witness the evidences of his own defeat; Miss Martin and Mrs. Smith were completely subdued, and followed him out quickly.

On the threshold they met a messenger pale and breathless, who, as he passed into the group still surrounding their pastor, could only point towards the house Mr. Townsend had so lately left, and say—"Quick, quick, for God's sake, or you will be too late!"

Before the close of that short week, a sad and silent crowd gathered in the house so lately the abode of quiet domestic happiness.

One by one they passed into the darkened room, and stood beside the coffin of her who had been an angel of consolation to them all. A smile of peace dwelt on the still features; the long lashes, never again to be upraised, rested upon the cheek henceforth to know not the moisture of bitter tears. So holy, so calm was that perfect repose, that those who were weeping involuntarily checked the expression of their grief. Why weep for her? At rest from all pain, lying there so peacefully, with her babe clasped to her heart—the babe that had but glanced at the light of earth, and then closed its soft blue eyes willingly, to be borne in the arms of a dying mother "into the silent land."

When the simple rite was nearly ended, and they were preparing to close the coffin for the last time, one bent over it that refused to be comforted. The last three days had stamped the mark of years upon their pastor's haggard face. There was a wildness in the glance he sent among his people, that made every one shudder with the fear that the fate he dreaded was come upon him; but this changed to an indescribable expression of yearning agony, when he lifted his wondering children for the last look upon their mother's face. Then came a still and gentle woman, far older, but much like the mother of these little ones, and a stern man, whose face softened for an instant as he gazed into the coffin, but instantly settled again to a harsh and resolute rigidity.

Those who pitied all the stricken group, and would willingly have borne a part of their suffering for them, did not know that the father of the dead cursed in his heart the man who had won his daughter from her early home, even while he looked upon her holy face, nor that his harsh threat of forcing her to return thither, conveyed in the letter she had so fondly welcomed, was the immediate cause of all this desolation.

How the slanders, to which he gave full credence, had reached Mr. Warner, was never known, but they had caused his hasty resolve to withdraw her from a protection he had never fully assented to, and the cruel letter had proved the death-blow to her already overburdened heart.

Mr. Townsend *did not* go mad; though, with a knowledge of his history, many feared that he would become a maniac. His sorrow seemed after a time a thing apart from actual life, and he entered as earnestly as ever upon the duties of his calling. A chastened expression of sadness became habitual to his face; the

smile so many loved became more rare than ever. He could not stay where every thing excited some agonizing recollection of the past, but in a new sphere, and surrounded by those who appreciated his singularly elevated character, he fulfilled a round of unostentatious and benevolent labour. His people saw him always calm and rarely outwardly depressed, but they did not know of the hours in which he "wrestled with hidden pain." The solace of his children's society was rarely accorded to him. They are growing up in the house in which their mother's childhood had been passed, and will inherit the wealth which was her rightful portion.

The first cause of this strange and fearful sundering of a happy family, was altered little by the consequences of his malicious slander. True, he was degraded from his office of deacon, and for an interval shut out from the communion of the church, but he only vouchsafed the remark "that he didn't mean to make no mischief, and it all came of Deacon Whiting's taking it up so seriously."

Deacon Whiting at length ceased trying to account for the mysterious Providence that had sent so severe a trial upon an innocent and truly excellent man.

"God knows best though," he would say to his wife, "and I suppose it's all right. I've often thought our minister's wife was getting too good for this world, but unless it was what made us all really charitable towards each other, and careful in particular as to what we say about our neighbours' failings, I don't see why she might not have been taken to Heaven without suffering all she did. However, we haven't changed our minister since, and before that no one ever stayed with us over two years."

It would be hard, indeed, were we to attempt to explain

why the innocent are so often the greatest sufferers in this weary world; and many a heart would utterly fail, were it not for a firm trust that all these things shall be known and approved hereafter.

Our sketch has *more* than its foundation in reality.

SKETCH THE SIXTH, AND LAST.

RETALIATION.

CHAPTER I.

“Let more than the domestic mill
Be turned by Feeling’s river;—
Let Charity “begin at home,”
But not stay there for ever.”

MRS. OSGOOD.



UR readers may recollect that a project was set on foot in Rivertown to establish an Orphan Asylum. This may perhaps seem an unnecessary institution in a country place, but recollect that Rivertown claimed by right of incorporation to be a city, and there is always more or less wretchedness, poverty and want, in the narrow lanes and dusty streets of every suburb. The lower part of the town which bordered upon the river, was composed almost entirely of low wooden houses, which had been among the first buildings erected at the time of its settlement, and were now rotten and dilapidated. These were principally inhabited by boatmen, negroes, and in fact the sediment of the population. This unin-

teresting district was familiarly termed "Wapping"—and was rarely entered by the better class, save on some charitable errand, or when an extra "washerwoman" was to be hunted up from among the idle and wretched creatures that inhabited it. In some such excursions, the ladies of the "Tract Distribution Society" had noticed several children who seemed to have no claim on any one, and were ignorant in the extreme. They were supported after a way of their own by the different families of the district, for it is a well-known fact to those who have visited much among the poorer classes of society, that they are often more truly generous than those who have the means to give liberally.

These children refused to go to the county poor-house, which was considered an open disgrace; and besides these, there was now and then some child of more respectable but equally destitute parents, left to the solitary lot of orphaned poverty.

There was no reason why these should not be comfortably cared for. Mrs. Townsend, who had often visited our best city institutions of the kind, at once proposed an Orphan Asylum. They could rent a convenient house until one could be built expressly for them, and a suitable person could be found at once to take charge of the institution.

Benevolence became, on the instant, a mania in Rivertown. Even the children were infected, and the little girls, we beg their pardon, *the young ladies* of the French Seminary—*instituted a sewing and charitable society*. This, however, proved rather an unfortunate movement, if it be true "that charity begins at home." There was a quarrel at the outset, as to who should have the honour of the official appointments,—the Secretary refusing to serve because she was not President, and the Treasurer

being equally indignant that she was nominated third in command. One visiting committee of two was appointed, who lost their slippers in the mud of the unpaved alleys, and splashed their pantalettes to a terrible degree. Besides this, not being *au fait* in such matters, they gave mortal offence to one old lady by entering her room, and asking if she "was very poor," because they saw no carpet on the floor, a sufficient indication in their eyes of extremest penury. Their next attempt was repulsed by — "Whose child be you? Won't you just mind your own business?"— and on the whole, the little ladies "retired in disgust."

At the first quarterly meeting, the report was as follows:—

"ON HAND—Four pair of woollen socks knit by twenty-seven different young ladies.

"Two coarse shirts commenced.

"Three small aprons spoiled in cutting out by Miss Bradley.

"Five night-caps finished all but the strings, the borders, and sewing in the crowns.

"Sixty-two cents in the Treasurer's hands, and all the officers resign."

The society called a meeting of its creditors and ceased to exist. But first there arose a terrible broil on account of the disappearance of the "cash in hand," from the treasurer's work-box, and that young lady, of course, falling under the suspicion of defalcation, she was at once removed from school by her indignant mamma, who, from the hour of departure, lost no opportunity to speak ill of the Seminary—its teachers, and the mothers of the three principal accusers of her "darling Sarah Ann."

But to turn from this junior display of misplaced benevolence, which we should not have dwelt upon, but that it daguerreotypes

so many mismanaged schemes for good, that have ended with similar disastrous results.

For a time the project of the Orphan Asylum progressed delightfully. The house selected for the purpose had been furnished by the contributions of different ladies, and the matron of the establishment seemed really to love the fifteen motherless little creatures placed under her charge. But the novelty wore off—dissatisfaction arose among the managers, and a few months after the death of their former director, Mrs. Townsend, the crisis of their poverty arrived. Winter was at hand—fuel and comfortable clothing must be provided, and there was not a dollar to commence their purchases with.

At this juncture, Mrs. McCloud, the wife of the principal lawyer in Rivertown, proposed the popular expedient of a fair. Miss Seymour, who thus beheld a grand opportunity for social gatherings in perspective, eagerly seconded the proposal. Mrs. Jackson rather discouraged the movement at first, but finding that it was decided on, resolved to lend any assistance in her power, as did Mrs. Jorden, who was once more re-established in her northern home, her health being fully restored, and herself as happy as the devotion of her husband could make her.

It was October when the first movement was made, and it was decided that, from that time until December, which was appointed as the end of their labours, they should meet for the purpose of preparing fancy articles, etc., once every week. Their meetings were to be held alternately, at the houses of the committee, which consisted of the ladies above mentioned with Mrs. Miller, who is also an old acquaintance.

Meanwhile storekeepers and milliners were besieged for “remnants” and “pieces”—while a standing advertisement was

placed in a conspicuous part of the "Republican" and the River-town "Gazette," to the effect that donations would be thankfully received by the committee at their respective residences.

The young ladies worked most industriously at pin-cushions and needle-books, while dolls enough to supply several rising generations were distributed for the completion of their wardrobes. Younger sisters were pressed into the service, and made to hem towels, or quilt "holders" for the "kitchen table," and consultations were held over receipt-books, that the greatest quantity of cake should be made with the smallest possible outlay.

CHAPTER II.

"Ah, fair! Yes, a fair! So delightful,
We work for it day after day;
There are several liberal donations,
And the pin-cushions cannot but pay.
To be sure papa calls it a 'humbug,'
And says it is 'thieving outright'—
But think of the charming flirtations
We can carry on night after night!"



REPARATIONS progressed rapidly. The excitement was really wonderful. There had been fairs before, frequently; Presbyterian fairs—Baptist—Episcopalian; but none in which all could meet on harmonious grounds—and the display was expected to be particularly brilliant.

The last meeting, or sewing circle, had been held. If the ground had not been already occupied by one whose descriptions

are Hogarthian in their graphic humour, we should be tempted to trace them through to their completion. But the "malice and uncharitableness" of sewing societies in general, have been placed before you by the inimitable author of the Bedott papers, and our feebler descriptions would fall far short of those she has so clearly painted.

The fair—they do not call them "bazars" as yet, in Rivertown—was to be held in the large hall, which served variously for "twenty-five-cent concerts"—(those with an entrance fee of fifty were more genteel, and invariably held in the large dining-parlours of the Rivertown House)—temperance lectures, and exhibitions of giants or dwarfs, as the case might be.

This building had once been the county jail, but afterwards had been modernized by some speculators, and the front being covered with cement in imitation of marble, it was thenceforth known as the "City Hall"—an ambitious title that provoked more than one allusion to "whited sepulchres."

In the upper room of this edifice, our committee were now assembled. It was in the morning of the day they had announced the festival to open, but it was an "undress rehearsal;" and matters looked dismal enough. The bare white-washed walls seemed ashamed of their very blankness, and impatient to be decorated by the evergreen wreaths and branches, in process of preparation by a band of younger ladies. Here, Adeline Mitchell presided, and thitherward were directed many withering and contemptuous glances from Miss Harriet Harden, who seemed more bitter than usual toward her *ci-devant* friend. Perhaps it was that she now considered herself quite above such an acquaintance, having succeeded, to all appearance, in getting up an astonishing intimacy with Miss Seymour, who called her "you dear creature,"

in the hearing of them all, numberless times. The Smith faction declared it was just a way Miss Seymour had of getting things out of people, and Harriet Harden would find, they guessed, that both she and Mrs. McCloud would alter, after all this fuss was over. But it remained yet to be proved, and meantime Harriet Harden was extremely confidential with her new friends, never seeming to mind that they managed to make her do thrice as much as any of them.

"Just run over and get some tacks from Mr. Williams, there's a dear soul," said Mrs. McCloud, who, with her hair in curl papers, seemed the presiding genius of the hour. "Tell him they're for us, and he won't charge you anything. Oh, and stop into Rosine's and mention that she needn't put quite so many eggs into the ice-cream; I shall want two or three dozen, I find, to finish icing that cake. Mrs. Morrison promised to lend me her cake-basket, and astral lamp—you won't mind fetching them just from there, will you? Oh, and Miss Harden, *do* stop at our house, and tell Susan that I shan't be home to dinner!"

So her "obedient servant" departed on errands which, under any other circumstances, she would not have stooped to perform; and returned weary and breathless to hear, "I shall depend on you to count all the spoons as they come in, and to furnish lamps for the supper table; where shall you go to borrow them?" Mrs. McCloud's friendship, like that of other ladies we have met, required the return of constant and wearisome service. She was one of those people who are Napoleons in a small way, and like all power or none. Here, for instance, although there was no nominal president of the committee, she invariably acted as such, and when requesting the other ladies to do anything, always said—"Just do this for *me*, won't you?" as if she was respon-

sible to a fearful extent, and all assistance was regarded in the light of a personal favour.

The others smiled at so plain a demonstration of her well-known disposition, and came good-naturedly to the conclusion, "To even let her hold the reins, while they showed her the way to go;" a species of management long ago recommended by advice and example with regard to the masculine portion of the community.

As usual, disputes had arisen with regard to the various stands or stalls. All wanted, in the first place, to be at the "fancy table"—pronounced by general consent the best situation in the room—and no person was found willing to undertake the books, or the kitchen department. Here Mrs. Jackson's tact was admirably displayed. She pointed out to the malcontents that the ice-cream was sure to be patronized most by the gentlemen; that, though one couldn't sell much at the book-table, the confinement was less than that of either of the others, and there was more time for a grand promenade. But the crowning stroke of her policy was whispering to a pretty school-girl, that gentlemen (whatever they might say) always looked for a wife who understood housekeeping; and to the astonishment of all, she shortly after professed herself perfectly ready to undertake the depository of towels and tin-ware, and was noticed for her particular zeal and success in vending those uninteresting commodities.

Miss Barnard and Mrs. Jorden had succeeded in arranging a picturesque tent with the assistance of a variety of "firemen's banners," which were the pride and boast of as many companies. These banners were frequently in demand for the decoration of ball-rooms, etc., and the lady in a remarkably blue dress, (the primest figure of the most noticeable one,) had looked frantic at

the destruction of her house, husband, and children, for several years past, through every variety of conviviality, and a perpetual reproof to those who danced and feasted quite regardless of her distress.

This tent was to serve as the post-office — and at the head of this department Mrs. Jorden had been unanimously appointed. Miss Brown, a young lady who pleaded guilty to the authorship of various poetical effusions, contributed to one of the Philadelphia Saturday papers, was her assistant. Miss Brown's assumed signature was "Rosalie de Nugent," and she blushed very deeply when addressed as Rosalie, by the young law-students who were in the secret, and said "Oh, don't!" in the prettiest expostulating tone imaginable.

"When do you think your picture will appear in the magazines?" whispered one of these gentlemen as he sorted the various mysterious-looking missives, that had been contributed by impromptu Lady Montagues, and modern Sevignés.

"Mine? oh, Mr. Van Allen! how could you dream of such a thing?"

"Why not, Rosalie? I'm sure you've been writing these two years. Does not Mr. —— always call you 'our graceful and accomplished correspondent,' and did not 'Hector' ask the colour of your eyes some time ago? I've noticed that last is an infallible sign that the editor intends asking an authoress to sit for her picture. Why shouldn't yours appear as well as Mrs. Ellet's and Mrs. Osgood's, and all the rest of *you* literary ladies?"

The last pleasing association of her name with actual writers, was quite too much for good-natured little Miss Brown. She returned an inexpressibly grateful look, and was observed to commence practising her autograph at once. She resolved that it

should not be the ungraceful scrawl she had seen appended to more than one published portrait.

Order at length began to spring from the chaos of house and storekeeping furniture, that had been steadily accumulating since morning. The rough pine tables were covered with snowy damask, and their contents arranged with neatness and taste. Even the aforementioned kitchen-table had become absolutely ornamental by a picturesque arrangement of bright tin-ware, and the addition of some few lighter articles to its legitimate store. Mrs. McCloud called upon the rest to admire the general effect, as if she was the main-spring and immediate cause of all they saw, while the young ladies, wearied and pale from incessant and unusual occupation, were almost too tired to be pleased with anything, and wondered how they should ever accomplish a becoming toilette, and return by seven o'clock.

One after another departed for an hour of rest and refreshment, and the hall was left to the care of the door-keeper, until the illumination of the lamps so liberally distributed, should disturb the twilight shadows.

CHAPTER III.

"'T was rather strange, the people thought—
 What could his business be?
 But soon conjecture ended with—
 'He's rich, and *thirty-three'*—
 And so affairs went on, and he
 Was welcomed everywhere;—
 The older ladies liked his cash—
 The younger liked his hair."

Poems by C. S. EASTMAN.

ELL, here we are again!" was Mrs. McCloud's salutation to Miss Seymour, as she took off her hood, and arranged the prettiest little cap imaginable. "Have they all got here?" and she turned from the small mirror to cast a furtive glance into the next room, through the half-opened door.

"Here's Mrs. Miller's shawl, and Mrs. Jorden's hood," was the reply—"I'll contrive to get the pattern of that, somehow, this evening; she brought it home from Washington. Yes, and Miss Brown's muff is over there, and Miss Barnard must have come with the Jacksons, for that's her old cloak, right by it."

"I suppose we're late, then, but Harriet Harden promised to be here before the lamps were lighted and see to everything on our table. What should we have done if we hadn't have managed to get so much out of that girl? she'd do anything to get into our set."

"I believe you. Come, are you ready?" and the two ladies sallied out of the little dressing-room, giving a last glance at the ten inch mirror as they did so.

What was their astonishment, and Mrs. McCloud's indignation, to find no Miss Harden at the deserted post. Only two half-grown girls to support the entire dignity of the cake table! Mrs. McCloud looked around the room; the delinquent was not among the really brilliant assembly; no one had seen her, and in fact, she was the last of all the amateur shop-keepers to enter the room. When she did, all eyes were turned upon her, for she was leaning on the arm of a tall, gentlemanly-looking man, apparently some thirty-five years of age, and an entire stranger.

The buzz of inquiry commenced directly. Mrs. McCloud forgot the reprimand she had duly prepared, (though she afterwards took care to administer it sharply,) to ask who "her distinguished-looking" friend was. Miss Harden looked more triumphant than ever, when she whispered it was a gentleman they had met the summer before in Berkshire county. "Immensely rich, and a widower," she added, with affected consciousness.

"You don't say? What's he here for?"

"That's best known to himself; he arrived this afternoon, and stops at the Rivertown House." Miss Harden's lips said this; her manner hinted that it was very plain! Of course he had come to renew his acquaintance with her."

Mr. Gould was introduced to Mrs. McCloud, who received him very graciously, and made him known to Miss Seymour. But as he shortly after proposed a tour of the room, Miss Harden again took his arm, and sailed away gloriously.

Of course they stopped at the fancy table, and were charmed

with the dolls and the pin-cushions; Miss Harriet was agonized lest he should discover the pretty night-caps, and chance to admire them also. Here several purchases were made by Mr. Gould, who seemed very liberal, and they were quite loaded with small parcels, when they moved on. Harriet was made to accept a toilette cushion she had manufactured herself, and a similar gift was held in store for her mother.

Mrs. Harden, by the way, was in ecstasies at her fair daughter's triumph. That Mr. Gould came to Rivertown at all was unexpected good fortune, but that he should arrive in the very "nick of time," as she eloquently expressed it, was too much for her parental sympathy and pride. Known only to their family, he was bound to them in a measure, whatever acquaintances he might afterwards make, and she was delighted to see the impression his *widowerhood* and reputed wealth made at once on the ladies of Rivertown, for by this time the story was whispered throughout the hall, with additions and alterations. Some declared Mr. Gould was positively a millionaire, and had come to offer his fortune and himself for Miss Harden's acceptance. Others said he had proposed the very moment of his arrival, while this was disputed by a third party who knew, from the best authority, that he had not yet committed himself, but intended to do so on the way home, or, at latest, the next morning before breakfast. Mrs. Folger hinted that they might have been engaged ever since the last summer, and he had come on now to be married. Mrs. Smith scorned such a probability—"How is it possible," said she, "that she could have kept it from *us* all this time!" How, indeed!

The walk of Mr. Gould and his fair companion of course ended at the ice-cream table. All promenaders make a halt at

that interesting stand. There is such a nice opportunity for a little flirtation as you lean against the pillars and trifle with your spoon. It is a post of observation, likewise, and if you have an escort you are anxious should be noticed in attendance upon you, this is the place, of all others, to be patronized. Harriet pecked at the "vanilla," and looked up at her companion with a sweet timidity that would have become one of the Seminary young ladies. A full attendance of those interesting misses was to be noticed, by the way, who talked and giggled, flirted and romped with the clerks of the various dry-goods stores, and the younger law-students before mentioned.

So here stood our heroine, as long as a very small saucer of ice-cream, furnished for "sixpence," would afford a pretext; with the delightful consciousness that all the young ladies were envying her, and even the Jordens had asked, in her hearing, who that fine-looking stranger was. And then she was reluctantly compelled to return to her duties at the cake-table, to the peril of leaving Mr. Gould to play the agreeable to Miss Seymour. However, he soon seemed to weary of her affectation, and vapid conversation, and, to Harriet's great delight, strolled off by himself without asking an introduction to any one else.

Now the truth of the matter was this: Harrison Gould, Esq.—so his letters were addressed—*was* a widower of some years' standing, and in comfortable circumstances. He had been a lawyer in the county town where he resided, but being naturally inclined to ease, had given up his practice and turned his attention to amateur farming. That is, he read scientific and agricultural books, and puzzled his head man—Roberts—with disquisitions on "soils and gases;" and was sure, at the end of the year, that it was owing to his researches and improved farming

utensils, that the crops turned out so well, while the neighbours attributed it to the experience and active supervision of Roberts. However, to let this pass—for it was an amiable weakness of a very good-natured man—Mr. Gould had at length grown tired of his solitary mansion. He thought Mrs. Roberts, though a very good housekeeper, was not exactly suited to direct the education of his two motherless daughters, who were approaching a hoydenish age, and “needed looking after.” In fine, one bright December morning, he came to the desperate resolution of marrying again. As he passed in review the various young ladies of his acquaintance—he could not think of a *widow*, not he!—there came a recollection of having been somewhat struck by a dashing woman he had passed a day or two with, at the house of a friend. She was no school-girl, it is true, but he hated your chits—he wanted a companion for himself, a mother for his children. So he further resolved, as he himself termed it, “to look her up”—and confer upon her the distinguished honour of his name, should she please him, upon more intimate acquaintance.

And all this while we have left him sauntering about the fair! No—he had grown weary of that, and ensconced himself in a convenient niche near the “post-office,” where he could watch the carnival before him, at the same time sheltered in a measure from observation by one of the “banners” we have before alluded to.

He was quite comfortable here, and soon grew to distinguish individuals among the crowd that now thronged the room.

He saw little children pause wistfully before the cake-table, and compare the three pennies left of their small store, with the nice tart marked sixpence. How the longing look passed away, and returned again as the young spendthrift came in view of tho-

gaily-dressed dolls, and the fancy pin-cushions. He heard the young ladies pressing their beaux to purchase things that could be of no manner of use, and were besides exorbitantly dear, with an irresistible look, and "please do, for *I* made it." Ah, there was no denying then, and the young gentleman emptied his purse, and went without a new pair of boots in consequence. He noticed Mrs. McCloud floating around the room, overseeing, planning, and admiring, with her most consequentially patronizing air. His eyes rested for a long time on the calm, peaceful face of Mrs. Jackson, its pensive beauty heightened by the plain mourning dress she had not yet laid aside.

And then he could not help overhearing a conversation that was going on in the little tent near which he leaned, of course unobserved by its inmates.

"Oh, it's better than any farce," said the merry voice of Mrs. Jorden, "to watch the Hardens this evening. Mamma's so delighted at the prospect of Miss Harriet's having an offer at last, and so anxious any one should see the gentleman she intends for the honour of her son-in-law, and should understand that 'he lives on the interest of his money!'"

"So he has really been caught!" said Miss Barnard, in return. "Poor fellow! he's rather good-looking."

The listener could have boxed her ears for this patronizing remark.

"Yes, and seems sensible in all other points. I wonder he allowed himself to be 'hooked.' If Harriet was an angel in herself, I should think the prospect of having such a mother-in-law to manage one's family affairs, would frighten any man."

"My dear Marie," interposed another voice, evidently her

husband's, "you are too severe. I do not believe you have yet forgiven that little curiosity of theirs."

"Why not so much that, Hal, but it displayed them all so perfectly. First, their watching you, and listening to a gossiping seamstress; then that visit of inspection to Mary. No *lady* would ever read another person's letters."

"Are you sure that Miss Harden did?"

"Why of course. She told Adeline Mitchell so. Didn't you know they have never spoken since the morning of Mary's wedding? I have thought better of Adeline ever since. I looked over at her to-night on Miss Harden's entrance, and was delighted to find that, though it was evidently expected she would be withered, confounded, not a glance or a movement betrayed the least curiosity or chagrin. I'm inclined to think she's a good creature, after all. At any rate, she has never tried to force herself into any set of acquaintances, and it has been perfectly annoying to see how Harriet Harden has toadied to Mrs. McCloud from the moment this affair commenced. Such an opportunity was not to be lost; I have been positively angry that any *woman* should stoop so low."

"Pshaw, Marie, one sees that in any society. Never more fully displayed than at Washington. I should have thought you had become accustomed to it there."

Mr. Gould had heard quite enough of his intended relatives. He had never liked Mrs. Harden particularly, and he could not help noticing her fussy officiousness in pointing him out to any one near her, when he emerged from his concealment. No man likes to feel himself baited for; though perhaps willing enough to be caught where he does not see the hook. Mr. Gould began to grow nervous, and meditated returning to Berkshire the next

morning. While absorbed in these delightful reflections, he found himself standing near a very sensible, quiet-looking person, apparently about Miss Harden's age, who was in attendance at the much undervalued "kitchen table." It might have been suggested by her surroundings, but somehow, as he watched her dispose of towels and holders, give "change" to purchasers from the pocket of her pretty silk apron, (Mr. Gould had a particular *penchant* for a little black silk apron, it always seemed so home-like,) he began to wonder if she was engaged, or if she were a wife already.

Contrary to his first intention, he turned once more to Miss Harden, who welcomed the truant with a "smile of sweet chiding," which was quickly changed to a contemptuous curl of the lip, as he asked the name of the lady he had just been observing.

"I have n't the honour of her acquaintance," was her somewhat ungentle reply — and Mr. Gould began to wonder how he had ever thought Miss Harden agreeable. "I'm not the first man of my years that's gone on a fool's errand," was his consolatory reflection; but he twirled his watch-chain uneasily, for all that.

Later in the evening he found himself once more by the plain young lady, and, by way of introduction, began asking the price of her wares. She smiled; he found she had good teeth; — if there was any thing he noticed first, it was good teeth — his own were remarkable for regularity and brilliancy. She had a pleasant voice — Mr. Gould agreed with Shakspere, that it was "an excellent thing in woman." She conversed sensibly, and was witty without being sarcastic, and as he was regretting politeness would not allow a longer chit-chat, Mrs.

McCloud happened to come up, and said, "Mr. Gould, Miss Mitchell," in her most gracious and affable manner.

It was not accident that brought Mrs. McCloud up there just at that moment. She had wondered what they were talking about, and besides, the good-natured lady knew that she could not more effectually annoy Miss Harden than by the said introduction. Some people take such pains to be of service to their friends!

Mr. Gould started. He understood Miss Harden's negative now—at least, he thought he did—and Adeline, though she had altered very much for the better since her intimacy with Harriet had ceased, and was now really what she seemed to be, a sensible, good-natured girl, could not but feel a little pleasure in the turn affairs had taken. Don't blame her, ladies—you would have felt just the same, only, ten to one, you would have shown it more plainly.

Mr. Gould walked home with Harriet Harden that evening, of course; it was his duty to do so; he had escorted her there; and he was very civil, very polite; in fact, so much so, that Harriet answered her mother's anxious inquiries, with the information that she thought he'd propose before the week was out, and then retired to dream of a delightful residence in Berkshire. The dream was, however, preluded by a speculation as to the material of her wedding-dress, and the number of pounds of fruit-cake that would be requisite. "There's one thing"—was her last sleepy reflection—"Adeline Mitchell shall die with envy. The creature! to flirt with him as she did to-night. However, he saw through it all"—and her maiden meditations ended. But strange to relate, Mr. Gould did not call the next day. Stranger still, he walked home with Adeline Mitchell in the evening; they

went down before the Hardens, on the other side of Main Street. Several remarked it. But the ensuing morning he called very early, and proposed a walk before the hour she should be on duty, and then he was particularly attentive to her all the evening.

The fair lasted four days, evenings inclusive. It was wonderfully successful, every one said. But we must follow other fortunes, and cannot pause to tell of the silver that was missing—the table-linen ruined—the disputes that arose—the innumerable cold dinners that were eaten in Rivertown during the whole of that eventful week; or how a general amnesty ensued, and the Orphan Asylum flourished, and flourishes still, to the great credit of the energetic ladies who planned and supported it; and the kind matron whose heart is bound up in her little charges, and who spends health and strength for their comfort and well-being, without a murmur. God reward her, say we!

We can only mention, as we close this chapter, that Mr. Gould left Rivertown after a fortnight's visit, leaving Miss Harden in a delightful state of uncertainty with regard to his intentions. Though "she was sure, from what he said—he would write directly. There was one consolation; he seemed to have found out that artful Adeline Mitchell, long before he left."

CHAPTER IV.

CONCLUSION.

"At last a story got afloat—
 And like a wild-fire flew,
 That Polly Peep knew—certainly!
 Exactly what she knew!"

"They came to think, that, after all,
 'Twas not so great a catch,
 And rather pitied *her*, because
 She'd made so bad a match."

EASTMAN.



NCE more, and for the last time, we chronicle a spring in Rivertown.

If you had not felt the balmy south wind, or looked up at the deep, deep blue sky, you could have told from the appearance of nearly every household that it was near the first of May. Among other uncomfortable fashions the Rivertonians had introduced from New York, that of a general moving on one day in the year, was widely patronized. Many seemed to have what the French call *un grand talent* for migration, and one lady was so noted for this, that her friends were accustomed to ask, where she was living *now*, whenever they spoke of visiting her; as we say of some young ladies not remarkable for constancy—"who are they engaged to *at present?*?"

All who remained stationary, celebrated the commencement of May by a grand house-cleaning festival—the ladies looking like so many laundresses, the gentlemen being martyr-like in their endurance of an evil they could not avert, and the whole house

remaining no unapt representation of “chaos,” for the time being. Mrs. Harden was the chief priestess of the celebration of these household mysteries. She always commenced “cleaning,” at least a week before any one else, and prided herself on paint that was as free from soil as her own good name; brasses that dazzled the eye with their brilliancy; and white-washing as “smooth and even” as if it had been done by a coloured professor of the art.

So May had come, and Mrs. Harden was in her element. The morning set apart for the above-mentioned process of white-washing had arrived. Harriet, who hated anything like work, took an early departure, intending to make the tour of the shops, call at the dress-maker’s, and finish the day sociably with her friend Mrs. Smith.

Mrs. Harden’s face brightened, as she watched the steaming of the lime-kettle before her. The parlour furniture was all carefully covered with quilts and counterpanes, and herself equally disguised in a faded calico loose-dress, (the uniform on such occasions,) her night-cap pressed into service, and tied closely by an equally faded ribbon; her dress sleeves were tucked up to the elbows, and about an hour after her daughter’s departure, with a brush tempered by clean hot water, she was ready to commence. Other people might trust their parlour ceilings to a woman—she, Mrs. Harden, never would; she was not going to have the paper ruined, and the colour taken out of the paint with splashes! So, mounted upon the kitchen ironing-table, the first long dash was made, the operator dexterously closing both eyes, to avoid falling drops, and “ducking” her head for the same purpose.

Alas, that a scene of such calm and quiet domestic happiness should be rudely disturbed! There was a violent “slamming”

of the front door, a hurried rush through the hall, and Harriet appeared before her mother in such a picture of angry despair, that Mrs. Harden, for once, lost presence of mind and dropped the handle of the brush into the lime-kettle, as she threw up both hands in astonishment.

"My goodness! child, what *is* the matter?"—and Mrs. Harden "abandoned her position" with a jump that made the whole room shake.

"I wish I was dead—I wish I never had seen—I wish you wouldn't stare at me so, ma!"

"Do you know what you're talking about, Harriet? What *has* happened?"

"Adeline Mitchell—Mrs. Smith—Adeline's *going to be married!*" gasped the young lady, showing evident hysterical symptoms, such as flinging her arms about wildly, and panting, as her eyes rolled with a ghastly expression.

"Well, I *am* beat—oh, mercy! there goes your best bonnet right into the white-wash!"

"I don't care—I don't care," murmured the sufferer. "Let me alone—I don't care if I never wear it again—I'll never go out of the house——"

"Don't act like an extravagant fool," was the maternal response. Mrs. Harden could not appreciate her daughter's present abandonment. To be sure, it was enough to provoke a saint, to have Adeline Mitchell married first. Two years younger at the least calculation—not a bit genteel!

"Who is it to?" she continued. "Some greenhorn or other, I'll be bound."

But the inquiry produced a fresh convulsion, and some time elapsed before Mrs. Harden gathered that—could she believe her

senses?—that Adeline Mitchell would actually become *Mrs. Gould!*

“The mean thing!” said Miss Harriet.

“That flirt of a fellow—after being so desperate attentive to you, too!” responded her sympathizing mamma.

“Came here on purpose to see me—I know he did—and then to take up with her!”

“He ought to be sued for breach of—of—” here Mrs. Harden fortunately recollected herself, and added “peace”—in the most quiet tone imaginable.

“Men are all alike,” was her next ejaculation.

“As far as I’m concerned—” Harriet had intended to say it did not make the least difference to her *who* Mr. Gould married, but she was not *quite* equal to so much resignation as yet, and left the sentence unfinished, apparently to comment on her mother’s previous remark.

At length the storm in a measure subsided. The Rivertown Ariadne had been calmed by “a good cry,” and began to narrate particulars; Mrs. Harden forgot the hardening lime, and sat down in a rocking-chair to listen.

“Instead of going to Van Duseñ’s, I thought I’d stop into Miss Van Brooch’s to see how much fringe I wanted for that dress, and as I came in, I noticed her *hustle* away the work she was at into a drawer that was open by her. But one sleeve fell on the floor, and as I picked it up, I saw it was the richest silk I ever laid my eyes on.

“‘That’s for Mrs. McCloud, I suppose,’ said I—I didn’t expect any one else could afford it.

“‘No it ain’t for Mrs. McCloud,’ said she; ‘I never made up half so handsome a piece of silk for her; and here’s another for

the same person'—it was an elegant embroidered stone-coloured merino, just like Mrs. Jorden's. 'And that ain't the wedding-dress either,' she went on; 'nor the wedding-dress ain't all; I never saw such an elegant fit-out in my life,' said she, and so she went on. I knew it was useless to try and get it out of her who it was for—she always was so awful close—though I teased, and promised to be as still as death about it. I was just giving up in despair, when what should I see but a handkerchief wrapped around the merino, which, though there was no name on it, I knew it in a minute; it was one of that first set Adeline and I hemstitched, three years ago; I could swear to it anywhere; she stained it terribly the first time she used it, and there was the mark of it yet. I felt as if I should have dropped, but I didn't say one word. Before you knew it, I rushed into Mrs. Smith's; I thought I should hear some news, but she right out with it in a minute. It was she that told me it was Mr. Gould. I'll tell you how she found it out. Her John has been helping in the Post-office for a while back, and he says letters came twice a week regularly to Adeline Mitchell. They're post-marked 'Union Four-Corners, Berkshire Co.' She was coming over here this afternoon to tell us, the spiteful thing! Pretending it was too bad—she felt so sorry for my disappointment, she said, (who asked her to, I'd like to know?) and so did Mrs. Folger. *She* came in. *She* says they're going to be married soon, for two boxes, that must have had wedding-cake in them, came up in the boat last night, directed to the Mitchells, and they've cleaned house a month before they usually do."

"Yes, that they have," said Mrs. Harden, "if they're through already—I thought I was ahead in that particular."

Miss Harriet was here overcome by the recollection of all she

had lost, and Mrs. Harden glanced disconsolately around the forlorn apartment.

Ah, it was too true!—and here, where we first made the acquaintance of our Rivertown friends, we must bid them adieu. A change had come over the then cheerful room, and a deeper shade over its inmates. It would have been adding to grief, if any one had held up a mirror of the intervening time, and shown the disconsolate maiden, that, if she had not interfered in the fortunes of others, her own would have been unmarred. How curiously the chain of circumstances had been linked, that now bound down all her hopes for the future! Hope would have been unavailing—for not even the expectation of an offer ever again crossed her path.

Mrs. Folger was right in her predictions. Adeline was married soon, within that very week, but so privately, that no one discovered it until the carriages containing the bridal party stopped at the railway depot. Mr. Gould's arrival the day before had escaped notice, and most of the gossips were electrified by the news.

"What will Harriet Harden say?" asked Mrs. Jorden of her sister, as they saw the carriages drive from the door.

"That is the best of the whole thing. If you could only have seen the air with which she told me this morning, 'that those who couldn't get what they liked, must take up with what they could find,' as poor Mr. Gould had done; as if any one would ever be made to believe that Harriet Harden had refused *any* man! Moreover, she informed me, that Mr. Gould was not half so wealthy as people supposed, he had lost so much in the Marble Stock Company, and she guessed Adeline Mitchell would find her hands full with those romping girls to manage. How could any woman ever dream of being a *step-mother*!"

"It was a mystery," Mrs. Jorden confessed; and then all three laughed heartily. We say all three, for our old friend Mary Butler had arrived the day before, and they were passing a delightful morning together, in talking over old times. The gentlemen had gone out—Mary's little one was asleep; so there was nothing to disturb them, except when Mary now and then stole into the next room to bend over "the baby," with all a young mother's tender watchfulness for her first-born.

And so—partings seem the order of the day—we will leave them also;—the younger ladies surrounded by all that ministers to earthly happiness, and the *widow*, finding in the conscientious fulfilment of daily duty, "that peace which the world *cannot* give." Her child was daily growing more like her lost one, and he filled the void in affections that else might have craved another object to love and to trust.

Mrs. Gould is quoted as a pattern step-mother, and has become the pride of her husband and his household; good Mrs. Roberts wondering "how they ever managed without her." It is strange how some natures expand and improve in the atmosphere of a congenial home. The matronly Mrs. Gould would hardly be recognized as the discontented and somewhat scandal-loving Miss Mitchell of our first acquaintance.

Her first visit to her old home caused some little excitement recently in Rivertown, where all things go on as usual. There have been two weddings there the past winter, but John Harden declares it is n't half so lively as when Harriet and Mrs. Smith had Adeline to help them set the neighbourhood by the ears.

Mrs. Harden and Mrs. Folger are not of much use to them either, at present; the one lady being deeply interested in the

spread of Homœopathic principles, and the other having become so interested in California news, that all other seems insipid.

“Even as some sick men will take no medicine, unless some pleasant thing be put amongst their potions, although it be somewhat hurtful, yet the physician suffereth them to have it: so, because many will not hearken to serious and grave documents, unless they be mingled with some fable or jest, therefore reason willeth us to do the like”—says that quaint old writer, Sir Thomas More. And this has been the argument of the apparently trifling sketches through which your patience, dear ladies, has accompanied us.

The little time that we have mingled in society, has taught us that “gossip” is the root of its deepest evil. Trifles are misrepresented and magnified; a whisper of suspicion becomes the death-warrant of family peace, and the stain on a spotless character. And though we are well aware that

“More offend from want of thought,
Than from any want of feeling—”

we have seen the bitterest suffering ensue—perhaps there is none more intense known to a woman’s heart. If these pages shall have aided to place this more fully before any, and lead them to cherish that “charity which *thinketh* no evil,” then is their author’s purpose already accomplished.

THE PORTRAIT
SKETCHES
IN PROSE AND VERSE.

SKETCHES

IN PROSE AND POETRY.

THE PORTRAIT;

OR,

THE WIFE'S JEALOUSY.

“The picture is too calm for me,
Too calm for me,” she said.”

MISS BARRETT.



OULD it be possible that it was three weeks since my marriage? We were at the end of our journey, yet I wished it were just commenced. The carriage rattled over the rough pavements,—the street-lamps flashed brilliantly through the darkness; and the noisy murmur that rose upon the evening air, so unlike the quiet of my mountain home, told me that I was in the heart of the city, near to the mansion in which I was to pass so much of the future. No wonder my heart beat fast, as the roll of wheels was hushed, and that I gazed eagerly through the night to catch the first glimpse of my destined dwelling-place. I could see that the house was large, and I thought there was a gloomy air about it; but this might have been caused by the swaying of the leafless trees, as they moaned in the autumn wind; or perhaps the huge wreath of ivy, that hung heavily from the dark wall. Then I

turned from the window, for a dear voice whispered, “This is our home,—*your* home, my bird; think you it will be a happy one?”

How could I doubt it, when eyes beaming with deep affection questioned me?—My own gave reply; my heart was too full for words.

A strong arm bore me from the carriage, and shrinking from the chill blast, I did not look up until we stood in the warmly lighted hall. The servants had gathered there to see their new mistress, with the housekeeper at their head. I knew she would be kind to me, the moment my eyes looked upon her motherly face—it was so placid and gentle; but when she came to greet me, I was timid as a child, and clung to my husband’s arm, as he gracefully received her congratulations, offered in the name of the household.

“Let Margaret take your wraps,” said he, as we entered the parlours. “You must rest a little before tea, and then we’ll explore the house together.” I yielded a ready assent,—for I was fatigued with the long day’s ride,—and sank into the luxurious seat, which he had drawn near to the cheerful grate, arranging the cushions with his own hand. Margaret was very kind and attentive; she looked almost with affection upon Herbert, anticipating his slightest wish, and promoting his comfort in many ways, which, young and thoughtless as I was, I should never have noticed. Then as I marked the mildness and deference with which he replied to her lightest question, I loved him all the more; for my own haughty spirit was rebuked, and almost unconsciously his gentle manner became my own.

It was a happy hour—perchance the happiest in my life—when I went from room to room, leaning upon his arm,

and listening, as he pointed out the many little comforts and elegancies which had been arranged for me; trifles which I had not thought man ever noticed, yet on which home enjoyment in so great a measure depends. Nothing had been forgotten,—he was so thoughtful,—so considerate. We lingered at length, in a little apartment opening from the drawing-room, which had pleased me more than any other. It was fitted up as a library, and the recesses were lined with quaintly-carved book-shelves, of some dark, highly-polished wood. On one—apparently a recent addition—I found all my favourite authors,—those we had read and studied together, when I first learned how noble was the intellect that had bowed to bestow thought and affection upon me. Low, cushioned chairs, and luxurious lounges were scattered about, and the heavy crimson curtains that excluded the cold, gave a warmth and “coziness” to the apartment, that made me feel, for the first time, as if at home. More than all, a piano, exactly like the one that had been my own, stood smiling a welcome from its ivory keys, and the songs I had first sung for him were lying beside it. I could almost have cried with joy, it was so like a dear familiar face; and when my husband drew me more closely to his side, and told me his hope that I would not pine in my new home, I felt it was indeed mine, and that his love and care would make it a Paradise. Father,—mother,—sisters,—they were all dear, I had been their idol; but as my hand trembled within Herbert’s, I felt that I should be amply repaid for all I had given up for him.

Very beautiful were the dear eyes that sought an answer in my own; the forehead was as pure as the noble intellect which it enshrined; the mouth, delicate as a woman’s, yet fine in its outline, told of the combined strength and sweetness that so sin-

gularly marked his character. A reverence had even mingled with my deep love, for the first flush of youth had passed from his brow, subduing the once brilliant complexion to a delicacy more in accordance with the thoughtful expression which he ever wore, save when he listened and replied to me. There were many years' difference in our ages, but I wondered when I heard it almost sneeringly remarked the morning of our bridal. Could those who jested at that holy hour, have looked into my heart, they could have seen that this added to my devotion; for time had but given dignity to his carriage, and strength to his character. Young and untried as I was, I felt, as I then gave my future happiness to his keeping, that I could not have trusted him so fully, had he not already passed the ordeal of rash impetuous youth.

I could but wonder that one so gifted, so honoured, loved an ignorant child such as I. Well has it been said "true love maketh the heart humble." But when I saw that, strange as it seemed, it was indeed so,—his affection was warm and sincere, I could say, in the words of Zelucoth, "In loving I have not found thee much older or wiser than myself, and I should not quarrel with these few gray hairs, did they not remind me how many years of that love I have lost." There were no threads of silver mingling with the light curls that lay upon Herbert's temples; but they were thinned by deep thought, ay, and by illness. But for this, you would not have dreamed that life's meridian was already attained. Yet knowing his gentleness and forbearance, there were those who prophesied that our marriage would bring unhappiness instead of joy to us both. Not that he was older than myself—that was well, they said—I should have a guide and protector in him; but they croakingly whispered that *I was a second*

wife; the shadow of the first could rest upon our household. I had known ere we met, that "the friend of his youth was dead"—that years had passed since he laid her in the grave, with her babe upon her bosom; and after I had learned to watch for his footsteps hoping that he sometimes thought of me, I listened to the sad story from his own lips. There was not a thought of jealousy in my soul. He had been perfectly candid and truthful; I had required this; and when he spoke of her beauty and loveliness of character, I could not have trusted him, had he not shown a devotion to the memory of one so worthy. I prayed silently that I might be fitted to fill her place,—and felt that I should be satisfied with a remnant of the affection so long since given to her.

Not long before our marriage, we had been speaking of her wonderful beauty. "Have you a portrait, or miniature?" said I.

"There was one suspended by my own a few months before her death; it is still in the library, and shall be undisturbed if you choose so: we will look at it together some day." From that time it was constantly in my thoughts.

My friends smiled at what they called my infatuation when I spoke enthusiastically of his first wife, and how devoted Herbert had been to her.

"A strange subject with which to entertain a young bride," said they; but I cared not, for I knew he loved me better than I was childishly petulant as others might have been. It was a pleasure for him to speak freely of the departed, and as I have said before, I thought I should be content with a divided heart.

As we rested in that pleasant little room, the portrait came to my recollection, and I glanced around hastily in search of it. The heavy frame was gleaming from the shades of a recess, but

I did not like to approach it; there seemed an intrusion on the enjoyment of the hour. An undefined sensation of discomfort crept over me; but it passed quickly, and I was once more happy, oh, so happy!

When Margaret attended me to my own room, I spoke of her former mistress. The old lady's eyes brightened in a moment. "Oh! she was an angel!—so good!" and for the first time the praise annoyed me, fell jarringly on my ear. That night I could not speak. It may have been weariness, or the novel aspect of the room which prevented me, but whatever the cause I lay for hours restless and disturbed; thinking,—at times, half dreaming,—and again broad awake. The portrait! how it lingered in my mind! I pictured it to myself in every possible light, and at length I cautiously arose, and throwing on a wrapper thrust my feet into velvet slippers, and left the room. Like a guilty creature I stole silently down the stairs, shading the lamp lest its faint light should betray me. As I entered the library, the fire, which was not yet extinguished, flashed luridly upon the object of my search, and revealed it suspended by the image of *my husband*. I almost held my breath as I looked eagerly upward at the beautiful vision.

The eyes, large and lustrous, were fixed upon mine as if they would read the innermost heart; a smile lingered about the small mouth, and an almost unearthly serenity and purity rested upon the forehead. A scarf floated over the head, veiling, yet not concealing clusters of luxuriant curls,—and though it was gathered about the throat, its folds revealed the gently swelling bust. It was the perfection of womanly beauty.

Half unconsciously I turned to the mirror to mark the contrast. A slight girlish figure, a face pale with restless thought, and eyes

wan and sunken, greeted me. My hair was streaming in tangled masses over the white drapery which I had hastily wrapped about me, and the loose sleeves had fallen back, disclosing an arm as yet imperfect in its outline. “How *can* he love me!” was my first thought; “he must constantly compare me with that perfect face and form.” I was utterly humiliated, yet I did not blame him; for when I crept to his side hours after, I prayed, while my eyelids at length closed in heavy slumber, that forgetting my youth and ignorance, he might look with indulgence upon my follies, and love me with only half the affection he had lavished upon her.

For a time, the novelty of everything,—the constant round of gayety consequent upon an introduction to a new home and circle of acquaintances, drove all thoughts save love for Herbert from my mind. But at length visits and out-door engagements became less frequent, my husband devoted himself more closely to professional duties, and I had my leisure hours which I passed in solitary musings, with my books and needle for companions. My mornings were usually passed in the library, and often I have gazed for hours on those portraits, turning from one to the other, and marking the fitness of that first union. But other feelings began to mingle with these reveries. The slightest accident will often arouse thoughts that have long slumbered, a word release flames that have hitherto glowed in the darkness.

I was sitting one morning with a young friend who had been ushered into this room for the first time. She praised it to my heart’s content. So carefully shaded, so prettily furnished! the books, the music,—and, stopping before the pictures, “Why did you not tell me that your portrait was here?” said she, then suddenly looking grave as she saw her mistake, begged pardon for

her thoughtlessness, and added “she did not expect to find *that* picture in my boudoir.”

I did not like the peculiar emphasis with which she spoke, but though the blood rushed to my face, quietly replied that it was my wish to have it remain; and then tried to turn the conversation. But my visitor would not be diverted. “That can hardly do justice to Mrs. Morton’s face,” she continued, “though I do not recollect her distinctly. Aunt has often told me she was the most beautiful woman in the city. Grandpapa was very fond of her, and says, when she sang, it seemed the voice of an angel, and he could imagine nothing more like Heaven than her smile. I should be jealous if I were in your place, and insist on having it removed; but you are a strange creature.” Some one else being announced, she gaily took leave, little thinking how poisonous an arrow her light words had winged to my heart.

That day for the first time my husband’s caresses seemed cold, and his words of affection to lack that tenderness that had made them as music to my ear. In the evening he did not sit with me as usual, but pleading a difficult case which had perplexed him through the day, and required much study, he retired to the library, leaving me alone. I cast myself upon the sofa, and burying my face in my hands, gave way to an uncontrollable burst of tears, calling myself the most unhappy of women, thinking the time which I so dreaded had come,—that my husband no longer loved me.

My passion had blinded me. I did not mark that he was far paler than I had ever known him, the effect of many days’ close confinement in a crowded court-room, listening to one of the most important cases that had ever been argued before him. I did not reflect, that since the day of my leaving home, he had been constantly at my side; refusing all invitations in which I was not

included, though well fitted to grace the festive board. He had almost estranged his friends by this seclusion; yet I forgot the past. "He is weary of his new plaything," I murmured bitterly. "He looks on me as a child; he does not deem me worthy of confidence, or capable of sympathy with his lofty pursuits." Yet I knew that *she* had shared every thought; *she* had aided him to gain the lofty position he now occupied, by her advice and encouragement. Perhaps he was even then seeking inspiration before her image. "It shall not be—he *must* love me, for he has vowed to," and as this thought came to me, I sprang hastily to my feet, and in a moment was standing beside him.

Herbert looked up in surprise from the manuscript he was reading. "Oh, is it you, Eveline? I thought you were amusing yourself in your own room, happy to be rid of your tiresome husband for once."

He rose as he spoke, and putting back the curls from my forehead, kissed me tenderly. How rebuked I felt for my unjust suspicions! My eyes fell before his kind enquiring glance, although I had come resolved to upbraid him; and shrinking from his arm—for I felt that I did not deserve such gentleness, I muttered something about a book, and taking the first that I saw, left him again to his solitude. An hour more and he joined me; during that time I had resolved to stifle and subdue the sinful thoughts that had made me so miserable, and met him with a joy I tried in vain to conceal.

How frail are our best resolves! how unconquerable an unjust suspicion when once rooted in the mind! Again that terrible feeling returned, and gradually became stronger, as I ceased to struggle against it. Its influence followed me everywhere. In my own room, I remembered the former occupant, and it became

hateful to me ; my mirror was shunned, for beside my own image I could ever see the face which had been years ago daily reflected there ; I despised the girlish beauty of which I had once been so proud, as I thought of that magnificent form, in its rich development of womanly beauty. Still an irresistible influence drew me to the library. I sat there for hours, while my work fell forgotten at my feet, studying with a strange earnestness, every lineament of that beautiful face. All things seemed to conspire in adding to my misery : in any word that was spoken I could trace some hidden meaning. The very servants seemed to disdain my rule. I had requested that some slight alteration should be made in the arrangement of the drawing-room furniture ; but ere it could be effected, Margaret came in haste to say, "Certainly it should be done if I wished ; but poor Mrs. Morton had ordered it to be placed as it now was, a few days before her death ; and Mr. Morton had never allowed it to be moved. Perhaps he does not care *now*," she added, as I thought in a murmuring tone—and I felt that she also loved the first wife better than the new.

Days, weeks, passed slowly. I became discontented and morose. I shrank from my husband's caresses, and when he tenderly asked if I were ill, gave no reply. How could I tell him the vile feeling that o'ermastered every other ! How could I return his kisses, when I remembered whose lips had once been as fondly pressed ! Yet, strange as it may seem, I encouraged him to speak of her, to tell a thousand little things that circumstances recalled. Every word was a dagger, yet I sought the wound ; there was a strange pleasure in thus inviting the torture. Herbert marked that my cheeks flushed, and my eyes brightened as I listened ; he thought it admiration for the noble character thus disclosed. His pure mind dreamed not that *I was jealous of the dead !* Yet it was even so.

I noticed one evening that he did not seem as cheerful as usual, and, with a feeling of self-reproach, asked if he was ill. "No, not ill," he said, "only a little sad; it is the anniversary of Amelia's death." I withdrew my hand from his brow, as if a serpent had suddenly fastened upon it; but in a moment checked my emotion, and when he proposed going to the library, followed him without a word. He paused at the piano, and asked me to play for him, saying that it was a long time since he had heard me sing. The ballad he selected had been arranged by her, and I doubted not that he had often listened to its melody from her lips; yet, though I touched the keys mechanically, there was no discord of voice or instrument to betray me. Herbert thanked me as I concluded, but he was lost in thought, and the commendation seemed given from habit, rather than impulse.

"Did you ever notice the peculiar beauty of Amelia's mouth?" he asked at length,—the piano was directly before the pictures,— "It was certainly the most beautiful mouth that I ever saw; and that hand, could any thing be more faultless? But no copy could equal the original."

He did not think the remark unkind, for, as I have said, I had ever encouraged him to speak freely of her. Perhaps he wondered why I did not respond as usual; but my mood was most bitter. Those who in my girlhood flattered me, had said my mouth was by far the most beautiful feature of my face. I knew well that it was so. Even Herbert, in our first acquaintance, had marked the haughty curve of the crimson lips; and the first time that my hand ever rested in his own, he spoke of its delicacy, and laughingly said the slender fingers were far too aristocratic for an American maiden. Yet now *her* mouth was perfect; *her* hand incomparable.

I endured that night, agony such as I had never before

imagined. I watched Herbert's features, as their outline was revealed in the calm moonlight, and my heart was filled with a wild love, that would have been thought madness, by natures less enthusiastic than my own. I recalled the hour when first we met, the thrill of deep emotion with which I had heard his first loving word,—the kiss that sealed my promise to be his wife,—the long, long days of happiness that followed, when we rode, sat, or walked together, I, as if in a dream of delight, trying to comprehend the extent of the treasure which had been so suddenly bestowed upon me. But now all was changed. I was beginning to realize that,—

“Man full speedily forgets the idol of a day.”

Such was the fatal blindness which enshrouded me.

My husband stirred in his slumber, and a pleasant smile stole over his face, as his outstretched hand fell heavily upon my own. The slight pressure increased my misery. I longed to waken him with a kiss, to fold my arms about his neck, and pray him to love me again; pleading, oh! so earnestly, that he would teach me how to be worthy of him.

If I could but tell him all—all, that distressed me! But something restrained me, even as my mouth bent to his,—prompted me to leave his side,—a feeling that it was no longer my place. Again I left the room in the hush of midnight, and ere I was aware whither my footsteps tended, stood before the picture which had such a strange power to embitter my existence.

Oh! the mocking smile which played over that face! It wreathed the pale lips, and gleamed from those glorious eyes! A look of scorn and derision which said,—“I am avenged!” My husband's eyes looked down coldly and reprovingly, and thereto as I turned again towards Amelia, I saw the hand which grasped

the scarf, slowly extended from the picture ; it pointed in mockery towards me, and yet I could not turn from the hated sight. I stood as if turned to stone,—how long, I knew not. I remember that the moonlight grew misty and indistinct, that the pictures swam before me, while a thousand voices seemed ringing in my ears. Then the agony which I endured struggled for utterance in a low deep moan, and I fell senseless upon the thick carpet.—

I was roused from a death-like slumber by a kiss so gentle, that at first I thought it the touch of the spring breeze, which wandered through the room. But the breeze in its murmurings never whispered such loving words as those which fell upon my ear, when I languidly unclosed my eyes, and looked towards the light. Everything was strange, yet familiar ; and it was many moments ere I could recollect how or where, that terrible stupor had fallen upon me. This was my own room, I was leaning upon the breast of my husband, and when I wondered that morning had come so quickly, he told me that my unconsciousness had lasted for many days.

I had left the room in the delirium of a violent fear ; the extended hand was a phantom which it had conjured up. Missing me from his side, Herbert was startled by the moan and heavy fall, and had found me lying, as if dead, before the portrait. For hours they were unable to restore suspended animation, but at length the swoon gave place to wild ravings, in which I revealed the secret of my heart.

I have told you that my life was a dream of delight when I first knew that Herbert wooed me for his wife ; that the weeks following our marriage had sped as if winged ; but never have I known such calm, unalloyed happiness, as in the long, bright days of my convalescence, when Herbert was more tender, more

devoted, than ever before. The spring flowers which he brought to cheer my room, seemed doubly fragrant—the poems which he read acquired a new charm, as he

“Lent to the rhyme of the poet
The beauty of his voice.”

and there I first learned, from his gentle praises and commendations, that self-appreciation is a duty devolving upon all. “Every grace is not combined in one,” he said,—and told me that the sincere and truthful love which I had given him, endeared me as much as a powerful intellect and peerless beauty would have done. That as yet I knew not the strength of my own character, and in its development under his careful scrutiny and counsel, he had promised himself much pleasure. Above all, I learned that man’s heart may know a second love, pure and devoted, while the first is unforgotten. My error had been the too frequent one of judging the emotions of another by my own. I left my room, when the flush of health was once more restored to my cheek, a better and a wiser woman; I had attained that perfect love, which casteth out fear.

The recess is now entirely filled, for my own portrait is added to the two first placed there. My husband grows daily more proud of the little daughter, who sits upon his knee, and points with her dimpled hand to “good papa”—and her “two mammas”—for she insists that she has claim to both. It was but last evening, that Herbert looked up, with an odd smile playing about his fine mouth, and asked me if I did not think our little Amelia grew daily more like the portrait that had once been my terror; I replied in the affirmative, without one feeling of jealousy, for I should be proud to think that she resembled, both in mind and person, the first wife of my husband.

TREES IN THE CITY.

'T IS beautiful to see a forest stand,
Brave with its moss-grown monarchs, and the pride
Of foliage dense, to which the south wind bland
Comes with a kiss, as lover to his bride ;
To watch the light grow fainter, as it streams
Through arching aisles, where branches interlace,
Where sombre pines rise o'er the shadowy gleams
Of silver birch, trembling with modest grace.

But they who dwell beside the stream and hill,
Prize little treasures there so kindly given ;
The song of birds, the babbling of the rill,
The pure unclouded light and air of heaven.
They walk as those who seeing cannot see,
Blind to this beauty even from their birth,
We value little blessings ever free,
We covet most the rarest things of earth.

But rising from the dust of busy streets,
These forest children gladden many hearts ;
As some old friend their welcome presence greets
The toil-worn soul, and fresher life imparts.
Their shade is doubly grateful when it lies
Above the glare which stifling walls throw back,
Through quivering leaves we see the soft blue skies,
Then happier tread the dull, unvaried track.

And when the first fresh foliage, emerald-hued,
Is opening slowly to the sun's glad beams,
How it recalleth scenes we once have viewed,
And childhood's fair, but long-forgotten dreams !
The gushing spring, with violets clustering round—
The dell where twin flowers trembled in the breeze—
The fairy visions wakened by the sound
Of evening winds that sighed among the trees.

There is a language given to the flowers—
To me, the trees “dumb oracles” have been ;
As waving softly, fresh from summer showers,
Their whisper to the heart will entrance win.
Do they not teach us purity may live
Amid the crowded haunts of sin and shame,
And over all a soothing influence give—
Sad hearts from fear and sorrow oft reclaim ?

And though transferred to uncongenial soil,
Perchance to breathe alone the dusty air,
Burdened with sounds of never-ceasing toil—
They rise as in the forest free and fair ;
They do not droop and pine at adverse fate,
Or wonder why their lot should lonely prove,
But give fresh life to hearts left desolate,
Fit emblems of a pure, unselfish love.

THE

NEW ENGLAND FACTORY GIRL.

A SKETCH OF EVERYDAY LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

HOPING AND PLANNING.

For naught its power to STRENGTH can teach
Like EMULATION—and ENDEAVOUR.

SCHILLER.


HE family of Deacon Gordon were gathered in the large kitchen, at the commencement of the first snow-storm of the season. With what delight the children watched the driving clouds—and shouted with exultation as they tried to count the fleecy flakes floating gently to the earth—nestling upon its bleak, bare surface as if they would fain shield it with a pure and beautiful mantle. Faster and faster came the storm; even the deacon concluded that it would amount to something, after all; perhaps there might be sleighing on Thanksgiving-day; though he thought it rather uncertain. His wife did not reply: she was bidding the children be a little less noisy in their mirth.

"We can get out our sleds in the morning, can't we, Mary?" said Master Ned. "I'm so glad you finished my mittens last Saturday. I told Tom Kelly I hoped it would snow soon, for I wanted to see how warm they were. Won't I make the ice-balls fly!"

Ned had grown energetic with the thought, and seizing his mother's ball of worsted, aimed it at poor puss, who was sleeping quietly before the blazing fire. Alas! for Neddy—puss but winked her great sleepy eyes as the ball whizzed past, and was buried in the pile of ashes that had gathered around the huge "back-log." His mother did not scold; she had never been known to disturb the serenity of the good deacon by an ebullition of angry words. Indeed, the neighbours often said she was *too* quiet, letting the children have their own way. Mrs. Gordon chose to rule by the law of love, a mode of government little understood by those around her. Could they have witnessed Ned's penitent look, when his mother simply said—"Do you see how much trouble you have given me, my son?" they would not have doubted its efficacy.

The deacon said nothing, but opened the almanac he had just taken down from its allotted corner, and thought, as he searched for "Nov. 25th," that he had the best wife in the world, and if his children were not good it was their own fault. The great maxim of the deacon's life had been "let well enough alone"—but not always seeing clearly what was "well enough," he was often surprised when he found matters did not turn out as he had expected. This had made him comparatively a poor man, though the fine farm he had inherited from his father should have rendered him perfectly independent of the world. Little by little had been sold, until it was not more than half its original size,

and the remainder, far less fertile than of old, scarce yielded a sufficient support for his now numerous family. He had a holy horror of debt, however—and with his wife's rigid and careful economy, he managed to balance accounts at the end of the year. But this was all—there was nothing in reserve—should illness or misfortune overtake him, life's struggle would be hard indeed for his youthful family.

The deacon was satisfied—he had found the day of the month, and in a spirit of prophecy quite remarkable, the context added, “Snow to be expected about this time.”

“It’s late enough for snow, that’s true,” said he, as he carefully replaced his “farmer’s library,” then remarking it was near time for tea, he took up his blue homespun frock, and went out in the face of the storm to see that the cattle were properly cared for. The deacon daily exemplified the proverb—“A merciful man is merciful to his beast.”

“Father is right,” said Mrs. Gordon, using the familiar title so commonly bestowed upon the head of the family in that section of country. “Mary, it is quite time you were busy, and you, James, had better get in the wood.”

The young people to whom she spoke had been conversing apart at the furthest window of the room;—Mary, a girl of fifteen, James, scarce more than a year her senior. They started at their mother’s voice, as if they had quite forgotten where they were, but in an instant good-humouredly said she was right, and without delay commenced their several tasks. James was assisted by Ned, who, since he had come into possession of his first pair of boots—an era in the life of every boy—had been promoted to the office of chip-gatherer; and Sue, a rosy little girl of eight or nine, spread the table, while her sister prepared the

tea ; cutting the snowy loaves made by her own hand ; and bringing a roll of golden butter she herself had moulded, Mrs. Gordon gave a look of general supervision, and finished the preparations for the evening meal by the addition of cheese — such as city people never see — just as Mr. Gordon and James returned, stamping the snow from their heavy boots, and sending a shower of drops from the already melting mass which clung to them.

Never was there a happier group gathered about a farmer's table, and when, with bowed head and solemn voice, the father had begged the blessing of Heaven upon their simple fare, the children did ample justice to the plain but substantial viands. Mrs. Gordon wondered how they found time to eat, there was so much to be said on all sides ; but talk as they would—and it is an established fact that the conversational powers of children are developed with greater brilliancy at table than elsewhere—when the repast was finished there was very little reason to complain on the score of bad appetites.

Then commenced the not unpleasant task of brightening and putting away the oft-used dishes. Mary and Sue were no loafers, and by the time their mother had swept the hearth, and arranged the displaced furniture, cups and plates were shining on the dresser, as the red fire-light gleamed upon them. The deacon sat gazing intently upon the glowing embers—apparently in deep meditation, though it is to be questioned whether he thought at all. Mrs. Gordon had resumed her knitting, while Sue and Ned, after disputing some time whose turn it was to hold the yarn, were busily employed in winding a skein of worsted into birdsnest balls.

" Seven o'clock comes very soon, don't it Eddy ? " said Sue, as their heads came in contact at the unravelling of a terrible

"tangle"—I wish it would be always daylight, and then wouldn't we sit up a great many hours? I'd go to school at night instead of the day-time, and do all my errands, and go to meeting too—then we should have all day long to play in, and if we got tired we could lie down on the grass in the orchard and take a little nap, or here before the fire, if it was winter. Oh, dear! I'm sure I can't see why there's any dark at all!"

"You girls don't know anything," answered Master Ned, with the inherent air of superiority which alike animates the boy and the man, where women are concerned—"If there was no night, what would become of the chickens? They can't go to sleep in the daylight, can they, I'd like to know? And if they didn't go to sleep, how would they ever get fat, or large; and maybe they wouldn't have feathers; then what would we do for bolsters, and beds, and pillows? You didn't think of that, I guess, Susy."

Ned's patronizing air quite offended his sister, but she did not stop to show it, for she had, as she thought, found an admirable plan for the chickens.

"Well," said she slowly, not perceiving in her abstraction that the skein was nearly wound, "we could make a dark room in the barn for the biddies, and they could go in there when it ought to be sundown. I guess they'd know—" but here there came an end to the skein and their speculations, for seven o'clock rang clearly and loudly from the wooden time-piece in the corner, and the children obeyed the signal for bed, not without many "oh, dears," and wishes that the clock could not strike.

"James," said his elder sister, as their mother left the room with the little ones, "let us tell father and mother all about it to-night. They might as well know now as any time; and Stephen will be back in the morning."

"Don't speak so loud," whispered the boy, "father will hear you. I suppose we might as well; but I do so dread it, I'm sure it would kill me if they were to say no, and now I can hope at least."

"I know it all," said his stronger-minded adviser; "but I shall feel better when they are told. I know mother wonders what we are always whispering about; and it does not seem right to hide anything from her. Here she is, and when we've got father's cider and the apples, I shall tell them if you don't."

Poor James! it was evident that he had a cherished project at stake. Never before had he been so long in drawing the cider. Mary had heaped her basket with rosy-cheeked apples before he had finished; and when at length he came from the cellar, his hand trembled, so that the brown beverage was spilled upon the neat hearth.

"You are a little careless," said his mother; but the boy offered no excuse; he cast an imploring glance at his sister, and walked to the window, though the night was dark as Erebus, and the sleet struck sharply against the glass.

"James and I want to talk with you a little while, father and mother, if you can listen now," said Mary, boldly; and then there was a pause—for she had dropped a whole row of stitches in her knitting, and numberless were the loops which were left, as she took them up again.

Her father looked at her with a stare of astonishment, or else he was getting sleepy, and was obliged to open his eyes very widely, lest they should close without his knowledge.

"Well, my child," said Mrs. Gordon, in a gentle tone of encouragement—for she thought, from Mary's manner, that the

development of the confidential communications of the brother and sister was at hand.

"We have been making a plan, mother—" but James could go no further, and left the sentence unfinished. "Mary will tell you all," he added, in a choking voice, as he turned once more to the window.

Mary did tell all, clearly, and without hesitation; while her mother's pride, and her father's astonishment, increased as the narrative progressed. James, young as he was, had fixed his heart upon gaining a classical education—a thing not so rare in the New England States as with us, for there the false idea still prevails, that a man is unfit to enter upon a profession until he has served the four years' laborious apprenticeship imposed upon all "candidates for college prizes." With us, the feeling has almost entirely passed away; a man is not judged by the number of years he is supposed to have devoted to the literature of past ages—the question is, what does he know? not, how was that knowledge gained? But in the rigid and formal atmosphere by which it was the fortune of our little hero to be surrounded, the prejudice was strong as ever; and the ambitious boy, in dreaming out for himself a life of fame and honour, saw before him, as an obstacle hardly possible of being surmounted, a collegiate education.

For months he had kept the project a secret in his own heart, and had daily, and almost hourly, gone over and over again, every difficulty which presented itself. He saw at once that he could expect no aid from his father, for he knew the constant struggle going on in the household to narrow increasing expenses to their humble means. His elder brother, Stephen, would even oppose the plan—for, he being very like their father, was plodding and

industrious, content with the present hour, and heartily despised books and schools, as being entirely beneath his notice. His mother would, he hoped, aid him by her approval and encouragement—this was all *she* could bestow; and Mary, however willing, had not more to offer. At length he resolved to tell his sister, who had ever been his counsellor, the project which he had so long cherished.

"I am not selfish about it," said he, as he dilated upon the success which he felt sure would be his, could this first stumbling-block but be removed. "Think how much I could do for you all. Father would be relieved from the burden of supporting me, for he does not need my assistance now, the farm is so small, and Ed is growing old enough to do all my work. Then you should have a capital education, for you ought to have it; and you could teach a school that would be more to the purpose than the district school. After I had helped you all, then I could work for myself; and mother would be so proud of her son! But, oh! Mary," and the boy's heart sank within him, "I know it can never be."

The two, brother and sister, as they sat there together, were a fair illustration of the "dreamer and the worker." Mary was scarce fifteen, but she was thoughtful beyond her years, yet as hopeful as the child. "Yes, I could keep school," thought she, as she looked into her brother's earnest eyes. "What can hinder my keeping school now; and the money I can earn, with James having his vacations to work in, might support him."

But with this thought came another. She knew that the pay given to district school teachers—women especially—was at best a bare pittance, scarce more than sufficient for herself—for she could not think of burdening her parents with her maintenance

when her time and labour were not theirs ; and she knew that her education was too limited to seek a larger sphere of action. So she covered her bright young face with her hands, and it was clouded for a time with deep thought ; then looking suddenly up, the boy wondered at the change which had passed over it, there was so much joy, even exultation, in every feature.

"I have it," said she, throwing her arms fondly about his neck. "I know how I can earn a deal of money, more than I want. If mother will let me, I can go to Lowell and work in a factory. Susan Hunt paid the mortgage on her father's farm in three years ; and I'm sure it would not take any more for you than she earned."

At first the boy's heart beat wildly ; for the moment, it seemed as if his dearest wishes were about to be accomplished. Then came a feeling of reproach at his own selfishness, in gaining independence by dooming his fair young sister to a life of constant labour and self-denial ; wasting, or at least passing the bright hours of her girlhood in the midst of noise and heat, with rude associations for her refined and gentle nature.

"Oh ! no, Mary," said he, passionately—"never, never ! You are too good, too generous !" yet the wish of his life was too strong to be checked at once ; and when Mary pleaded, and urged him to consent to it, and gave a thousand "woman's reasons" why it was best, and how easy the task would be to her, when lightened by the consciousness that she was aiding him to take a lofty place among his fellow-men, he gave a reluctant consent to the plan, ashamed of himself the while, and dreading lest his parents should oppose what would seem to their calmer judgment an almost impossible scheme.

Day after day he had begged Mary to delay asking their con-

sent, though the suspense was an agony to the enthusiastic boy. Mary knew the disappointment would be terrible ; yet she thought if it was to come, it had best be over with at once ; and, beside, she was more hopeful than her brother, for she had not so much at stake. Was it any wonder, then, that James could scarce breathe while his sister calmly told their plans, and that he dared not look into his mother's face when the recital was ended?

There was no word spoken for some moments — the deacon looked into his wife's face, as if he did not fully understand what he had been listening to, and sought the explanation from her ; but she gazed intently at the fire, revealing nothing by the expression of her features until she said, “Your father and I will talk the matter over, children, and to-morrow you shall hear what we think of it.” Without the least idea of the decision which would be made, James was obliged to subdue his impatience ; and the evening passed wearily enough in listening to his father's plans for repairing the barn, and making a new ox-sled. Little did the boy hear, though he seemed to give undivided attention.

“Have you well considered all this, my child,” said Mrs. Gordon, as she put her hand tenderly upon her daughter's forehead, and looked earnestly into her sweet blue eyes. “James is in his own room, so do not fear to speak openly. Are you not misled by your love for him, and your wish that he should succeed.”

“No, mother, I have thought again and again, and I know I could work from morning till night without complaining, if I knew he was happy. Then it will be but three or four years at the farthest, and I shall be hardly nineteen then. I can study, too, in the evenings and mornings, and sometimes I can get away for whole weeks, and come up here to see you all ; Lowell is not very far, you know.”

"But there is another thing, Mary. Do you not know that there are many people who consider it as a disgrace to toil thus—who would ridicule you for publicly acknowledging labour was necessary for you; they would perhaps shun your society, and you would be wounded by seeing them neglect and perhaps openly avoid you."

"I should not care at all for that, mother. Why is it any worse to work at Lowell than at home; and you tell me very often that I support myself now. People that love me would go on loving me just as well as ever; and those who don't love me, I'm sure I'm willing they should act as they like."

"I think myself," replied her mother, pleased at the true spirit of independence that she saw filled her daughter's heart, "that the opinion of those who despise honest labour, is not worth caring for. But you are young, and sneers will have their effect. You must remember this—it is but natural. There is one thing else—we may both be mistaken about the ability of your brother; he may be himself—and you could not bear to see him fail, after all. Think, it may be so; and then all your time and your earnings will be lost."

"Not lost, mother," said the young girl, her eyes sparkling with love and hope, "I should have done all I could to help James, you know."

Mrs. Gordon kissed her good-night with a full heart. She was proud of her children; and few mothers have more reason for the natural feeling. "I cannot bear to disappoint her," thought she, yet the scheme seemed every moment more childish and impracticable.

James rose, not with the sun, but long before it; and when his father came down, he was already busily employed in clearing a

path to the well and the barn—for the snow had fallen so heavily, that the drifts gathered by the night wind, in its rude sport, were piled to the very windows, obscuring the misty light of the winter's morn. How beautiful were those snow-wreaths in their perfect purity! The brown and knotted fencees, the dingy out-buildings, were all covered with dazzling drapery; and the leafless trees were bowed beneath the weight of a fantastic foliage that glittered in the clear beams of the rising sun with a splendour that was almost painful to behold.

"It won't last long with this sun," said the deacon, as he tied a 'comforter' about his throat; "but perhaps you'll have time to give Mary and the children a ride before the roads are bare again. Mary must do all her sleighing this winter, for she won't have much time if she goes to the factory, poor child!"

The deacon passed on with heavy strides to the barn-yard, and left James to hope that their petition was not rejected. It was not many minutes after, that Mary came bounding down the stone steps, heedless of the snow in which she trod; and the instant he looked upon her face, he was no longer in doubt.

"*Is n't* mother good, James! She just called me into her room, and told me that father and she have concluded we can try it at least; and Stephen is not to know anything about it until next April, when I am to go. We must both of us study very hard this winter, and I shall have such a deal of sewing to do."

Mary spoke with delighted eagerness. One would have thought, beholding her joy, that it was a pleasant journey which she anticipated, or that a fortune had unexpectedly been left to her; and yet the spring so longed for would find her among strangers, working in a close and crowded room through the bright days. But a contented spirit hath its own sunshine; and the dearest

pleasure that mankind may know, is contributing to the happiness of those we love. The less selfish our devotion to friends, the more sacrificing our self-denial in their behalf, the greater is the reward ; so Mary's step was more elastic than ever, and her bright eyes shone with a steady, cheerful light, as she went about her daily tasks.

As she said, it was necessary that they should both be very busy through the winter, for James hoped to be able to enter college in August ; and Mary, who had heretofore kept pace with him in most of his studies, though she did stumble at "tupto, tupso, tetupha," and vow that Greek was not intended for girls, did not wish to give up her Latin and Geometry. They had such a kind teacher in Mr. Lane, the village lawyer, that an ambition to please him made them at first forget the difficulties of the dry rudiments ; and then it was that James first began to dream of one day being able to plead causes himself—of studying a profession. Mr. Lane, unconsciously, had encouraged this by telling his little pupils, to whom he was much attached, the difficulties that had beset his youthful career, and how he had gained an honest independence, when he had at first been without friends or means. Then he would look up at his pretty young wife, or put out his arms to their little one, as if he thought, And is not this a sufficient reward for those years of toil and despondency ? James remembered, when he was a student, teaching in vacations to aid in supporting himself through term time. He had boarded at Mr. Gordon's ; and when he came to settle in the village, years after, he had offered to teach James and Mary, as a slight recompense for Mrs. Gordon's early kindness to the poor student. Two hours each afternoon were passed in Mr. Lane's pleasant little study ; and though Stephen thought it was time

wasted, he did not complain much, for James was doubly active in the morning. Mary, too, accomplished twice as much as ever before ; and after the day's routine of household labour and study was over, her needle flew quickly, as she prepared her little wardrobe for leaving home. March was nearly through before they felt that spring had come ; and though Mary's eyes were sometimes filled with tears at the thought of the approaching separation, they were quickly dried, and the first of April found her unshaken in her resolution.

CHAPTER II.

LEAVING HOME — FACTORY LIFE.

KO-MORROW will be the last day at home," thought Mary, as she bade her mother good-night, and turned quickly to her own room to conceal the tears that would start ; and, though they fringed the lashes of the drooping lid when at last she slept, the repose was gentle and undisturbed—and she awoke at early dawn content, almost happy. The morning air came freshly to her face as she leaned out of the window to gaze once more on the extended landscape. Far away upon the swelling hill-side, patches of snow yet lingered, while near them the fresh grass was springing ; and the old wood at the back of the house, was clothed anew in the emerald verdure. The sombre pines were lighted by the glittering sunlight, as it lingered lovingly among their dim branches ere bursting away to illumine the very depths of the solitude with smiles. A pleasant perfume was wafted

from the Arbutus, just putting forth its delicate blossoms from their sheltering covert of dark-green leaves mingled with the breath of the snowy-petaled dogwood, and the blue violets that were bedded in the rich moss on the banks of the little stream. The brook itself went singing on its way as it wound through the darksome forest, and fell with a splash, and a murmur, over the huge stones that would have turned it aside from its course.

It was the first bright day of spring; and it seemed as if nature had assumed its loveliest dress to tempt the young girl to forego her resolve. "Home never looked so beautiful," thought she, turning from the window; and her step was not light as usual when she joined the family. Mrs. Gordon was serene as ever; no one could have told from her manner that she was about to part with her daughter for the first time; but the children were sobbing bitterly—for they had just been told that the day had come when their sister was to leave them. They clung to her dress as she entered, and begged her not to go.

"What shall we do without *you*, Mary?" said they; "the house will be so lonesome."

Even Stephen—although when the plan was first revealed to him he had opposed it obstinately—was melted to something like forgiveness when he saw that nothing could change her firm determination.

"I suppose we must *learn* to live without you, Molly," said he; "take good care of yourself, child—but let's have breakfast now."

The odd combination, spite of her sadness, brought the old smile to Mary's lip; and when breakfast was over, and the deacon took the large family Bible from its appointed resting-place, and gathered his little flock about him, they listened quietly

and earnestly to the truths of holy writ. That family Bible! It was almost the first thing that Mary could recollect. She remembered sitting on her father's knee, in the long, bright Sabbath afternoons, and looking with profound awe and astonishment into the baize-covered volume, at the quaint, unartistic prints that were scattered through it. She recalled the shiver of horror with which she looked on "*Daniel in the den of lions*," the curiosity which the picture of the Garden of Eden called forth, and the undefined, yet calm and placid feeling which stole over her as she dwelt longest upon the "*Baptism of our Saviour*." Then there was the family record — her own birth, and that of her brothers and sisters, were chronicled underneath that of generations now sleeping in the shadow of the village church. But this train of thought was broken, as they reverentially knelt when the volume was closed, and listened to their father's humble and fervent petition that God would watch and guard them all, especially commanding to the protection of Heaven, "the lamb now going out from their midst."

There were tears even upon Mrs. Gordon's face when the prayer was ended, but there was no time to indulge in a long and sorrowful parting. The trunks were standing already corded in the hall; the little travelling-basket was filled with home-baked luxuries for the wayside lunch; and Mary was soon arrayed in her plain merino dress and little straw bonnet. There are some persons who receive whatever air of fashion and refinement they may have from their dress; others who impart to the coarsest material a grace that the most *recherché* costume fails to give. Our heroine was one of the last; and never was Chestnut street belle more beautiful than our simple country lassie, as she

stood with her mother's arm twined about her waist, receiving her parting counsel.

The last words were said. James, in an agony of grief, had kissed her again and again, reproaching himself constantly for his selfishness in consenting that she should go. The children, forgetting their tears in the excitement of the moment, ran with haste to announce that the stage was just coming over the hill. Yes, it was standing before the garden-gate—the trunks were lifted from the door-stone—the clattering steps fell at her feet—a moment more, and Mary was whirled away from her quiet home, with her father's counsel, and her mother's earnest "God bless you, and keep you, my child!" ringing in her ears.

It was quite dark ere the second day's weary journey was at an end. Mary could scarce believe it possible at first that she had, indeed, arrived in the great city. As they drove rapidly through the crowded streets, she caught a glance at the brilliantly-lighted stores, and the many gaily-dressed people that thronged them. Again the scene changed, and she looked upon the dark-brick walls that loomed up before her, and knew that in one of those buildings she was destined to pass many sad and solitary days. How prison-like they seemed! Her heart sank within her as she gazed; the lights—the confusion—bewildered her already wearied brain; and as she sunk back into the corner of the coach, and buried her face in her hands, she would have given worlds to have been once more in her still, pleasant home. The feeling of utter desolation and loneliness overcame completely, for the time, her firm and buoyant spirit.

She was roused from her gloomy reverie as the stage stopped before the door of a small but very comfortable dwelling, at some

distance from the principal thoroughfares. This was the residence of a sister of Mrs. Lane's, to whom she had a letter, and who was expecting her arrival. She met Mary upon the step with a pleasant smile of welcome, not at all as if she had been a stranger; and her husband assisted the coachman to remove the various packages to a neat little room into which Mary was ushered by her kind hostess, Mrs. Hall. She was very like her sister, but older and graver. Mary's heart yearned toward her from the moment of kindly greeting; and when they entered the cheerful parlour together, the young guest was almost happy once more. The children of the family, two noisy little rogues, and a baby sister, came for a kiss ere they left the room for the night; and then, with Mrs. Hall's piano, and her husband's pleasant conversation, Mary forgot her timidity and her sadness as the evening wore away.

"Mr. Hall will go with you to-morrow to the scene of your new life," said her hostess, as she bade her young charge good-night. "We have arranged every thing, and I trust you may be happy, even though away from your friends. We must try to make a new home for you."

Mary "blessed her unaware" for her kindness to a stranger; and though nearly a hundred miles from those she loved, felt contented and cheerful, and soon fell asleep to dream that she was once more by her mother's side.

Again that feeling of desolation returned, when, upon the morrow, leaning upon the arm of Mr. Hall, she passed through the crowded streets, and shrank back as the passing multitude jostled against each other. It seemed as if every one gazed curiously at her; yet, perchance, not one amid the throng heeded the timid little stranger. She was first conducted to the house

they had chosen for her boarding-place, and though the lady at its head received her kindly, she felt more lonely than ever, as she passed through the long halls, and was regarded with looks of curiosity by the groups of young girls who were just leaving the house to enter upon their daily tasks. They were laughing and chatting gaily with each other; and poor Mary wondered if she should ever feel as careless and happy as they seemed to be.

Then they turned toward the "corporation," or factory, in which a place had been engaged for her. Oh, how endless seemed those long, noisy rooms; how weary she grew of new faces, and the strange din that rose up from the city. "I never shall endure this," thought the poor girl. "I shall never be able to learn my work. How can they go about so careless and unconcerned, performing their duties, as it were, mechanically, without thought or annoyance? But for poor Jamie I would return to-morrow;" and with the thought of her brother came new hope, new energy—and she resolved to enter upon her task boldly, and without regret.

Yet for many days, even weeks, much of her time was spent in sadness, struggle as she would against the feeling. The girls with whom she was called daily to associate, were, most of them, kind and good-tempered; and though her instructors did laugh a little at her awkwardness at first, she had entered so resolutely upon her new tasks that they soon became comparatively easy to her; and she was so indefatigable and industrious, that her earnings, after a time, became even more considerable than she had hoped for.

Still she was often weary, and almost tempted to despond. The confinement and the noise was so new to her, that at first

her health partially gave way, and for several weeks she feared that after all she would be obliged to return to the free mountain-air of her country home. At such times she went wearily to her labours, and often might have uttered Miss Barret's "Moan of the Children," as she pressed her hands upon her throbbing temples.

"All day long the wheels are droning, turning,
Their wind comes in our faces,
Till our hearts turn, and our heads with pulses burning;
And the walls turn in their places!
Turns the sky in the high window, blank and reeling;
Turns the long light that droopeth down the wall;
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling—
All are turning all the day, and we with all.
All day long the iron wheels are droning,
And sometimes we could pray,
'Oh, ye wheels,' (breaking off in a mad moaning)
'Stop! be silent for to-day!'"

Then, when despondency was fast crushing her spirit, there would, perhaps, come a long hopeful letter from her brother, who was studying almost night and day, and a new ambition would rise in her heart, a fresh strength animate her, until at last, in the daily performance of her duties, in the knowledge of the happiness she was thus enabled to confer upon others, her mind became calm and contented, and her health fully restored.

Thus passed the first year of her absence from home. She had become accustomed to the habits and manners of those around her; and though some of the girls called her a little Methodist, and sneered at her plain economical dress, even declaring she was parsimonious, because they knew that she

rigidly limited her expenses to a very small portion of her earnings, there were others among her associates who fully appreciated the generous, self-sacrificing spirit which animated her, and loved her for the gentleness and purity which all noticed pervaded her every thought and act.

Then, too, Mrs. Hall was ever her steadfast friend. One evening in every week was spent in that happy family circle; and there she often met refined and agreeable society, from which she insensibly took a tone of mind and manner that was far superior to that of her companions. Mrs. Hall directed her reading, and furnished many books Mary herself was unable to procure. Thus month after month slipped by, and our heroine had almost forgotten she was among strangers, until she began to look forward to a coming meeting with those she loved in her own dear home.

CHAPTER III.

THE RETURN — THE LOSS.

OW vexatious is delay of any kind, when one's mind is prepared for a journey, "made up to go," as a good aunt used to say. Mary grew anxious, and almost impatient, as April passed and found her still an inhabitant of the city of looms and spindles. The more so, that spring was the favourite season, and she longed to watch its coming in the haunts of her childhood; and in the busy, bustling atmosphere by which she was surrounded, none

gave heed to the steps of "the light-footed maiden," save that our heroine's companions availed themselves of the balmier air to dress more gaily. In our larger cities, the ladies are the only spring blossoms. It is they who tell us, by bright tints and fabrics, that the time has come when nature puts on her gay apprelling; yet it is in vain that they imitate the lilies of the field; there is a grace, a delicacy in those frail blossoms, that art never can rival.

Mary had so longed for the winter to pass, she had even counted the days that must intervene before she could hope to see her mother, and all the dear ones at home. The little gifts she had prepared for them were looked over again and again; and each time some trifle had been added, until she almost began to fear she was growing extravagant. But she worked cheerfully, and most industriously, through the pleasant days, and when evening came, she would dream, in the solitude of her little room, of the meeting so soon to arrive.

"A letter for you, Mary—from home, I imagine," said her gay friend, Lizzie Ellis, bursting into her room one bright May morning. "I called at the post-office for myself, and found this, only. It's too bad the people at home don't think enough of their sister to write once a month; but I'm not sorry that your friends are more punctual. There's good news for you, I hope, or you'll be more mopish than ever."

Mary's lip quivered as she looked up. The instant the sheet was unfolded in her hand, she saw that it bore no common message. There were but a few lines, written in a hurried, nervous manner; and as her eye glanced hastily over the page, she found that she was not mistaken.

"Poor little Sue is very ill," said she, in reply to her friend's

anxious queries; "mother has written for me to come directly, or I may never see her again"—her tone grew indistinct, as she ceased to speak; and leaning her face upon Lizzie's shoulder, a burst of tears and choking sobs relieved her. Poor Sue—and poor Mary! It would not have been so hard, could she have watched by her sister's bedside, and aided to soothe the pain and the fear of the dear little one who had from the time of her birth been Mary's especial care.

Delay had before been vexatious, but it was now agony. The few hours that elapsed before she was on the way, were as weeks to Mary's impatient spirit; and then the miles seemed *so* endless, the dreary road most solitary. The night was passed in sleepless tossing, and the afternoon of the second day found her scarcely able to control her restless agitation. She was then rapidly nearing home. Everything had a familiar aspect; the farm-houses—the huge rocks that lifted their hoary heads by the roadside—the dark, deep woods—the village church—were in turn recognized. Then came the long ascent of the hill, which alone hid her home from view. Even that was at last accomplished, and she caught a glimpse of the dear old homestead, its rambling dark-brown walls, half-hidden by the clump of broad-leaved maples that clustered about it. Could it be reality, that she was once more so near all whom she loved? There was no deception; it was not the delusive phantom of a passing dream; her brother's glad greeting was too earnest; her mother's sobbed blessing too tender. After the hopes and plans of many weeks—even months—such was her "welcome home."

"You are in time to see your sister once more," said Mrs. Gordon, as she released Mary from a fond embrace; and a feeble

voice from the adjoining room, a whisper, rather than a call, came softly to her ears.

"Dear Susie—my poor darling!" were all the spoken words, as she clasped the little sufferer in her arms. The child made no sound, not even a murmur of delight escaped her wan lips. She folded her thin, pale hands about her sister's neck, and gently laying her head upon the bosom which had so often pillow'd it, lay with her large spiritual eyes fixed upon those regarding her so tenderly, as if she feared a motion might cause the loved vision to vanish. Fast flowing tears fell silently upon her face, but she heeded them not; then came fierce pain, that distorted every feature, but still no moan, no sound.

"Speak to me, Susie, will you not!" whispered Mary, awed by the fixed, intense gaze of those mournful eyes.

"I knew you would come, sister, to see me once more before I go," was the murmured reply. "I knew God would let me meet you here, before he takes me to be an angel in heaven. I am ready now, for I said good-bye to mother and Jamie, and all, long ago. I only waited for you, dear Mary. Kiss me, won't you—kiss me again, and call mother—I feel very strangely."

Her mother bent over her, but she was not recognized; her father took one of those emaciated hands within his own, but it was cold, and gave back no pressure. Awe fell upon every heart in that hushed and stricken group; there was no struggle with the dark angel, for the silver cord was gently loosened. The calm gaze of those radiant eyes grew fixed, unchangeable—a faint flutter, and the heart's quick pulsations for ever ceased.

Mary calmly laid the little form back upon the pillow. Her mother's hand closed the already drooping lids; a sweet smile

stole gently round the mouth, and its radiance dwelt upon the marble forehead.

"It is well with the child," said the bereaved parent—and her husband bending beside the bed of death, prayed fervently, while the sobs of his remaining children fell upon his ears, that they might be also ready.

"Oh, mother, how can I bear this! how can you be so calm and resigned!" said Mary, as her mother sat down beside her in the twilight, and spoke of the sorrowful illness of their faded flower. "I had planned so much for Susie; I thought as much of her as of myself, and here are the books, and all these things that I thought would make her so happy; she did not even see them. Why was she taken away, so good, so loving as she always was?"

"And would you wish her back again, my child; has she not more cause to mourn for us, than we for her? Think—she has passed through the greatest suffering that mortal may know; she has entered upon a world the glory of which it 'hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive of,' and would you recall her to this scene of trial and temptation? Rather pray, dear Mary, that we may meet her again in her bright and glorious home. I, her mother, though mourning for my own loneliness and bereavement, thank God that my child is at rest."

"If I could only feel as you do, mother; but I cannot. Poor Susie!" and Mary's tears burst forth afresh.

She begged to be allowed to watch through the night beside the form of the lost one, even though she knew the spirit had departed. But her mother would not allow this—some young friends, whom Mary could not greet that night, though she loved them very dearly, claimed the sad duty. And again, after a year

of new and strange life, she found herself reposing in her own quiet room, with sighing trees, the voice of the brook, and the low cry of the solitary whippo-wil, to lull her to sweet sleep.

It was Sabbath morning, calm and holy. The bell of the little village church tolled sadly and reverently, as the funeral train wound through the shaded lane. All the young people for miles around had gathered in the church-yard; and as the coffin was borne beneath the trees that waved over its entrance, they joined in the procession. It passed toward the place of worship, and for the last time the form of their little friend entered the sacred walls.

The simple coffin was placed in the broad central aisle, the choir sang a sweet, yet mournful dirge; then the voice of music and of weeping was hushed, for the man of God communed, with faltering voice, with the Father in heaven, who had seen fit in his mercy to take this lamb to his bosom; and when the prayer was ended, and an earnest and impressive address was made to those who had been bereaved, and those who sympathized with them, the friends and playmates of the little one clustered about the coffin to take a farewell glance of those lifeless yet beautiful features.

The pure folds of the snowy shroud were gathered about the throat, and upon it were crossed the slender hands, in which rested a fading sprig of white violets, placed there by some friend, as a fit emblem of the sleeper. Her sunny curls were smoothly bound back beneath the cap, and its border of transparent lace threw a slight shadow upon the deeply fringed lids that were never more to be stirred. Oh! the exceeding beauty and holiness of that childish face, in its perfect repose! None shuddered as they gazed; the horror of death had departed; but tears came to the

eyes of many, as they bent down to kiss that pure forehead for the last time.

Ay, “the last time!” for the lid was closed, as the congregation passed, one by one, once more into the church-yard, shutting out the light of day from that still, pale face, for ever. The mother gazed no more upon her child — brother and sister must henceforth dwell upon her loveliness but in memory — the father wept — and man’s tears are scalding drops of agony.

Many lingered until the simple rites were ended, and then turned away under the shade of sombre pines, to think of the loneliness that must dwell in the hearts of those from whom such a treasure had been taken; and they, as they turned to a home that seemed almost desolate, tried in vain to subdue the bitterness of their anguish. *They had seen her grave* — and who that has stood beside the little mound of earth that covers the form of some one loved and lost, has forgotten the crushing agony that comes when the first full realization that all is over — that hope — prayer — lamentation — is of no avail, for the “grave giveth not up its dead, until such time as the mortal shall put on immortality.”

The dark hearse, with its nodding plumes, bears the rich man from his door, to a grave whose proud monument shall commemorate his life, be its deeds good or evil. Perhaps an almost endless train of costly equipages follow; and there are congregated many who seem to weep, but I question if in all that splendour there lingers half the love, or half the regret, which was felt for the little one whose mournful burial we have recorded; or if the grave, with its richly wrought pile of sculptured marble, be as often visited, and wept over, as was the low, grassy mound, marked only by a clambering rose-tree, whose pure petals, as they

floated from their stems, were symbols of the life and death of the village favourite.

It was many days before the household of Deacon Gordon regained anything like serenity; but the business of life must go on, come what may, and in the petty detail of domestic cares, the keenness of grief is worn away, and a mournful pleasure mingles with memories of the past. It was in this case as in all others; gradually it became less painful to see everywhere around traces of the child and the sister; they could talk of her with calmness, and recall the many pleasant little traits of character which she had even at so early an age exhibited. The robin that she had fed daily, came still at her brother's call to peck daintily at the grain which he threw toward it. The pet kitten gambolled upon the sunny porch, or peered with curious face over the deep well, as if studying her own reflection, unconscious that the one who had so loved to watch her ceaseless play was gone for ever. Even Mary could smile at its saucy ways; and though the memory of her sister was ever present, she could converse without shedding tears, of her gentleness and truth, thanking God she had been taken from evil to come.

Then she felt doubly attached to her mother. She was now the only daughter; and though Mrs. Gordon seemed perfectly resigned, and even cheerful, she knew that many lonely and solitary hours would come when Mary was once more away. And James had so much to tell, for he, *too*, was home for a few days of the spring vacation, the rest being passed in the poor student's usual employment—school teaching. They would wander away in the pleasant afternoon to the depths of the cool green wood, and sit with the shadows playing about them, and the wind whispering mystic prophecies as it wandered by, recalling for each

other the incidents of the past year, and speculating with the hopefulness of eager youth, on the dim and unknown future.

A new friend sometimes joined them in their woodland walks. The young pastor of the village church, who had sorrowed with them at their sister's death, and who, having made Mary's acquaintance in a time of deep affliction, felt more drawn toward her than if he had known her happy and cheerful for many years. Somehow they became less and less restrained in his presence, and at last James confided to him his hopes and prospects. Mary was not by when the disclosure was made, or she would have blushed at her brother's enthusiastic praise of the unwavering self-denial which had led her away from home and friends, and made her youth a season "of toil and endeavour;" and she might have wondered why tears came to the eyes of their friend while he listened; and why he so earnestly besought James to improve to the utmost the advantages thus put before him. Allan Loring was alone in the world, and almost a stranger to the people of his charge, for he had been scarce a twelvemonth among them. Of a proud and somewhat haughty family, and prejudiced by education, he had in early youth looked upon labour of the hands as a kind of degradation; but the meek and humble faith which he taught, and which had chastened his spirit, made him now fully appreciate the loving and faithful heart, which Mary in every act exhibited, and he looked upon her with renewed interest when next they met.

Again the time drew near when Mary was to leave her home. A month had passed of mingled shadow and sunshine within those dear walls. It was hard to part with her mother, who seemed to cling more fondly than ever to her noble-minded daughter; her father and Stephen, each in their blunt, honest

way, expressed their sorrow that the time of her departure was so near at hand; but still, Mary did not waver in her determination, though a word from her mother would have changed the whole colour of her plans. That mother saw that for her children's sake it was best that they should part again for a season—and she stifled the wish to have them remain by her side. So Mary went forth into the world once more with a stronger and bolder spirit, to brave alike the sneers and the temptations which might there beset her pathway; with the blessings of her parents, the thanks of an idolized brother, and "a conscience void of offence," she could but be calmly happy, even though surrounded by circumstances which often jarred upon her pure and delicate nature, and which would have crushed one less hopeful of future peace and conscious present rectitude.

Beside, Mr. Loring had seemed, she knew not why, to take a deep interest in all her movements. He had begged permission, at parting, to write to her occasionally; and his letters, full of friendly advice and enquiry, became a great and increasing source of pleasure. There was nothing in them that a kind brother might not have addressed to a young and gentle sister; and Mary's replies were dictated in the same spirit of candour and esteem. So gradually her simple and child-like character was unfolded to her new friend, who encouraged all that was noble, and strove to check each lighter and vainer feeling which sprang up in her heart. At times she wondered why he should seem interested in her welfare; but gradually she ceased to wonder why he wrote, so that his letters did not fail to reach her. Still, noisy and fatiguing labour claimed her daily care; but in the long quiet evenings she found time for study and reflection; thus becoming, even in that rude school, "a perfect woman, nobly planned."

CHAPTER IV.

THE REWARD.



RE you fond of *tableaux*, dear readers? If so, let me finish my simple recital by placing before you two scenes in the life of our little heroine—something after the fashion of dissolving views.

Five years had passed since first we looked in upon that quiet country home. Five years of cheerful toil—of mingled trial—despondency and hope to those who then gathered around that blazing hearth. One, as we have seen, had been taken to a higher mansion—others had gone forth into the world, strong only in noble hearts, firm in the path of rectitude. We have witnessed the commencement of the trial, followed in part its progress—and now let us look to its end. No, not the end—for life is ever a struggle—there may be a cessation of care for a season, but till the weary journey be accomplished, who shall say that all danger is passed?

It was the annual examination at one of our largest New England female schools. The pretty seminary-building gleamed through the clustering trees that lovingly encircled it, and its snowy pillars and porticoes—vine-wreathed by fairy fingers—gave it an air of lightness and grace which village architecture rarely shows. Now the shaded path which led to its entrance was thronged, as group after group pressed upward. Carriages, from the simple “Rockaway” to equipages glittering with richly plated harness, and drawn by fiery, impatient steeds, stood thickly

around. It was the festival-day of the village, and each cottage was filled to overflowing — for strangers from all parts of the Union were come to witness the *début* of the sister, the daughter, or the friend.

Many were the bright eyes that scarcely closed in sleep the night preceding this eventful anniversary. There was so much to hope — so much to fear. “If I *should* fail,” was repeated again and again; and their hearts throbbed wildly as the signal-bell was heard, which called them to pass the dread ordeal. Such a display of beauty—genuine, unadorned beauty—rarely greets the eye of man. More than a hundred young girls, from timid fifteen to more assured one-and-twenty, robed in pure white, with tresses untortured by the prevailing mode, decorated only by wreaths of delicate wild flowers, or the rich coral berry of the ground ivy, shaded by its own dark-green leaves. A simple sash bound each rounded form, and a knot of the same fastened the spotless dress about the throat. Then excitement flushed the cheeks which the mountain air had already tinged with the glow of health, and made bright eyes still brighter as they rested on familiar faces.

The exercises of the day went on, and yet those who listened and those who spoke did not weary. The young students had won all honour to themselves and their teachers; and as the shadows lengthened in the grove around them, but one class remained to be approved or censured.

“Now sister—there!” exclaimed a manly-looking Virginian, as the graduates came forward to the platform. “Who is that young lady at their head. I have tried all day to find some one that knew her, but she seems a stranger to all.”

“With her hair in one plain braid, and large, full eyes? Oh,

that is Miss Gordon ; she has the valedictory, though why, I'm sure I don't know, for she has been in school but about a year, and Jenny Dowling, my room-mate, has gone through the whole course. Miss Gordon entered two years in advance. She was a factory girl, brother—just think of *that* ; and worked in Lowell three or four years. Miss Harrison wished me to room with her this term—but not I ; there is too much Howard spirit in me to associate with one no better than a servant-girl. Some of them seem to like her though ; and as for the teachers, they are quite carried away with her. Miss Harrison had the impertinence to say to me only last week, that I would do well to take pattern by her. Not in dress, I hope—" and the young girl's lip curled, as she contrasted her own richly embroidered robe with the simple muslin which Mary Gordon wore.

Clayton Howard had not attended to half that his sister said, for with low and earnest voice Mary had commenced reading the farewell address which she, as head of her class, had been chosen to prepare in its behalf ; and his eyes were riveted on the timid but graceful girl. We have never spoken of our heroine's personal attractions, choosing first to display, if possible, the beauty of heart and character which her humble life exhibited. The young Southerner thought, as he eagerly listened, that the flattered and richly-attired belle of the fashionable watering-place he had just left, was not half as worthy of the homage which she received, as was this lowly maiden. If beauty consists in regularity of features, Mary would have little in the eye of those who dwell upon outline alone ; but there was a high intelligence beaming from her full, dark eyes, a sweet smile ever playing about the small, exquisitely-formed mouth ; while soft, rich hair,

smoothly braided back, added not a little to perfect the contour of her queenly head.

Her voice grew tremulous with deep feeling as she proceeded, her eyes were shaded by gathering tears, and when, in behalf of those who were about to leave this sheltered nook, she bade farewell to the companions whose love and sympathy had made their school-days pleasant; the teachers who had been their friends as well as guides; scarce one in that crowded hall deemed it weakness to weep with those now parting. Never more could those cherished friends meet again; they were going forth, each on a separate mission, and though in after years greetings might pass between them, the heart would be utterly changed. The unreserved confidence, the warm affection of girlhood, passes for ever away, when rude contact with the world has chilled trust and childlike faith. And they knew this, though it was *felt* more fully in after years.

But tears were dried, as the enthusiasm which lighted the face of the reader—as her topic turned to their future life—was communicated to those who listened. She spoke to her classmates of the duties which devolved on them as women; of the strength which they should gather in life's sunshine, for the storm and the trial which *would* come. That their part was to shed a hallowed but *unseen* influence over its strife and discord—

“Sitting by the fireside of the heart,
Feeding its flames.”

“In that stillness which best becomes a woman,
Calm and holy.”

And when she ceased, and the gathered crowd turned slowly from the threshold, many hearts—beating in proud and manly bosoms—felt stronger and purer for the words they had that

hour listened to, from one who, young as she was, had learned to think and to act with a sound judgment and bold independence in the cause of truth, which shamed them in their vacillation.

Young Howard was leaning behind a vine-wreathed pillar, to watch the one in whom he had that day become strangely interested. His heart beat fast as she approached his hiding-place, and then sunk within him, as he noted the warm blush which stole over her face, as two gentlemen, whom he had not before noticed, came to greet her.

"Dear sister," said one, kissing her burning cheek, "have I not reason to be proud of you?"

The other, older by ten years than the first speaker, grasped the hand which she timidly extended to him, and whispered, "I, too, am proud of my future wife."

Howard did not hear the words, but the look which accompanied that warm pressure of the hand did not escape him. It destroyed at once hopes which he had not dreamed before were fast rising in his breast, and he turned almost sadly away from that happy group to join his sister.

"See," said the young girl, as she took his arm, "there is Mr. Loring, one of the finest-looking men I know of, and belongs to as proud a family as any in Boston, yet he is going to throw himself away on Mary Gordon. To be sure he is only a poor country clergyman, but he might do better if he chose, I'm sure."

Her brother thought *that* was hardly possible, though he did not say so; neither did he add—lest he should vex his foolishly aristocratic sister—that but for Mr. Loring the chances were that she would be called upon, so far as his inclinations were concerned, to receive Miss Gordon, not as a room-mate, but as a sister, before the year was ended.

CHAPTER V.

THE BRIDE AND THE WIFE.



STRANGER would have asked the reason of the commotion in the village, though every one of its inhabitants, from highest to lowest, knew that it was the morning of their pastor's bridal. None, not even the oldest and gravest of the community, wondered, or shook their heads in disapprobation of the choice. They had known Mary Gordon from her earliest childhood—they saw her now an earnest and thoughtful woman, with a heart to plan kind and charitable deeds, and a hand that did not pause in their execution. They knew, moreover, that for two years she had refused to take new vows upon herself, because she felt that her mother needed her care; but now that health once more reigned in the good deacon's dwelling, she was this day to become a wife, and leave her father's roof, for a new home and more extended duty.

Again we look upon the village church, but it is no mournful procession that passes up its shaded aisles. There are white-robed maidens thronging around, and men with sun-burned faces. Children, too, scarce large enough to grasp the flowers which they tear from the shrubs that climb to the very windows of the sanctuary; and through the crowd comes the bridal train. Mary Gordon, leaning upon the arm of her betrothed, is more beautiful than ever, for a quiet dignity is now added to the grace that ever

marked her footsteps; and he, in the pride of his manhood, looks with tenderness upon her.

The deacon is there, with his heavy good-natured face, lighted by an expression of profound content; and his wife is by his side, looking less calm and placid than usual, though she is very happy. It may be that she fears for her daughter's future welfare, though that can scarcely be when the dearest wish of her heart is about to be fulfilled; or, perhaps, as her eye wanders from the gay group around her, it rests upon a little grassy mound not far away, and she is thinking of one who would have been the fairest and the best beloved of all.

Stephen seemed to feel a little out of place, as he stood there with a gay, laughter-loving maiden clinging to his arm; but the happiest of all, if we may judge from the exterior, was James; arrived but the night before, after an absence of nearly two years. He had just been admitted to the bar; and Mr. Hall, who was present at the examination, said it was rare to meet with a young man of so much promise, and knowing his untiring industry, he had little doubt of his success in after life. So James — now a manly-looking fellow of three-and-twenty — was, after the bride, the observed of all observers; and not a few of the bride's white-robed attendants put on their most witching smile when he addressed them.

Despite of all the sunshine and festivity at a bridal, there is to me more of solemnity, almost sadness, in the scene than in any other we are called upon to witness, save that mournful rite, when dust is returned to dust. There is a young and often thoughtless maiden, taking upon herself vows which but few understand, in the depth of their import, vows lasting as life, and on the full performance of which depends in a great measure,

the joy or misery of her future years. Then, too, in her trust and innocence, she does not dream that change can come, that the loved one will ever be less considerate, less tender, than at the present hour. True, she has been told that it may be so—but the thought is not harboured for an instant. “He never could speak coldly or unkindly to me,” she murmurs, as eyes beaming with deep affection meet her own. Then, too, the proud man that stands beside her, may be but taking that gentle flower to his bosom, to cast it aside when its perfume shall have become less grateful—leaving it crushed and faded; or, worse still—and still more improbable, though it is sometimes so—there may be poison lurking in the seemingly pure blossom, that will sting and embitter his future life. Oh, that woman should ever prove false to the vow of her girlhood!

All these thoughts, I say, and many more scarcely less sorrowful, come to my mind when I look upon a bridal; and tears will start, unbidden it is true, when the faces of those around are radiant with smiles. But perhaps few have learned with me the truthful lesson of the poet—

“Hope’s gayest wreaths are made of earthly flowers—
Things that are made to fade, and fade away,
Ere they have blossomed for a few short hours.”

How could I call up such a train of sombre thought when speaking of Mary Gordon’s marriage? None doubted her husband’s truth, her own deep devotion, as they crowded around when the simple rite was ended to congratulate them, and breathe a fervent wish that their joy might increase as the years of their life rolled onward. They went forth from that quiet church with new and strange feelings springing up, and as Mary looked upon the throng who still reiterated their friendly wishes, she felt an

inward consciousness that God had blessed and sustained her through those years of trial and probation.

"Who would have thought that the deacon's Mary would ever have grown up such a fine woman?" said Aunty Gould, as she wiped her spectacles upon the corner of her new gingham apron. "The deacon himself ain't got much sperit in him, and as for *Miss Gordon*, I don't believe she ever whipped one of them children in her life. She always let 'em have their own way a great deal too much to suit me. Jest think of her letting Mary go off to Lowell in the midst of that city of iniquity, and stay three or four years, jest because James must be college larned. As if it warn't as respectable to stay to home and be a farmer, as his father and his grandfather was before him. I have n't much 'pinion of *him*, but Stephen Gordon is going to make the man. Steddy and industrious a'most as the deacon himself."

So we see the differences of opinion which exist in the narrowest community; for Mrs. Lane, as she turned toward her own bright home, said to her husband that Mary Gordon was a pattern to the young girls now growing up in the village. But for her honest independence and hardihood in braving the opinion of the world, her family might have been living without education, and without refinement. Now she had won for herself the love of a noble heart—could see her brother successful through her efforts, and knew that their parents were happy in feeling that this was so. "She has been the sun of that household," replied the husband, "and I doubt not will ever be the happiness of her own."

They were sitting alone—the newly-made husband and wife—on the evening of their marriage-day. They were in their home, which was henceforth to be the scene of all their love and labours. The last kind friend had gone, and for the first time that day

they could feel the calm, unclouded serenity which the end of a long and often wearisome toil had brought.

The moonlight trembled through the shaded casement, and surrounded as with a halo the sweet, serious face that looked out upon the night; and far around, even to the rugged mountains that rose as sentinels over the green valley, earth and air were bathed in that pure and tender radiance. The flowering shrubs that twined about the little porch seemed to give forth a more delicious perfume than when scorched by the sun's warm kiss. The neighbouring orchards, almost bending beneath the clusters of buds and blossoms that covered the green boughs, waved gently in the light breeze that showered the sunny petals as it passed upon the freshly springing grass beneath. The low cry of the whippo-wil came now and then from a far-off wood; save that, and the rustle of the vines clinging about the casement, no sound broke the sabbath-like repose. The church—scarce a stone's throw from the little parsonage—stood boldly relieved by the dark trees which rose beside it; and not far away—not too far for them to see by day the loved forms of its inmates—they could distinguish the sloping roofs and brown walls of Mary's early home.

The young bride turned from the scene without, and when she looked up into her husband's face he saw that her eyes were filled with tears.

"Are you not happy, my Mary?" said he, as he drew her more closely to his bosom.

"Happy! oh, only too happy!" was the murmured response, as he kissed the tears away. "I was but thinking of my past life; how strange it seems that I should have been so prompted, so guided through all! Then, stranger than the rest, that you

should love one so humble, so ignorant as myself. I may tell you now—now that I am your own true wife, how your love has been the happiness of many years. Ere I dared to hope that your letters breathed more than a friendly interest—and believe me I would not indulge the thought for an instant until you had given me the right so to do—though the wish would for an instant flit across my mind—I knew that one less wise, less noble than yourself would never gain the deep affection of my heart. I almost felt that I could live through life without dearer ties, if you would always watch my path with interest, awarding, as then, praise and blame."

"But, strange as it may seem, you did love me through all, deeply, devotedly. Oh, what is there in me to deserve such affection! and when I read those blessed words—'I love you, *Mary*, have loved you from an early period of our correspondence,' it seemed as if my heart were breaking with the excess of wild happiness which rushed like a flood upon it. How could you love me? what was there in me to create such an emotion?"

Allan Loring thought that the wife was far more beautiful than the maiden, as she stood encircled by his arms, gazing with deep earnestness, as if she would read his very soul.

"I cannot tell you all there is in you to love and admire," said he, tenderly, "and, indeed, my little wife would blush too deeply at a recital of her own merits and graces. But this I now recall, that the first emotion of deep interest which I felt for you, arose as I listened to your brother's recital of your wonderful self-denial, and persevering effort for his sake. I saw, young as you were, the germ of a high and noble nature, best developed,

believe me, in the rough and untoward circumstances by which you were surrounded. I wrote to you at first, thinking, perhaps, to aid you in the struggle for knowledge and truth; and as your mind and heart were laid open before me, how could I help loving the guileless sincerity which every act exhibited?

I knew that the good sister, the affectionate child, could not but make a true and gentle wife. So I thought myself fortunate, beyond my own hopes even, when I found you could grant me the only boon I asked—a deep and steadfast affection."

What heart is there that would not have been satisfied with such praise? and who, witnessing the calm spirit of content which animated both the husband and the wife, could have prophesied evil as the result of such a union.

We might follow our heroine still farther—might show her to you as the companion and assistant in her husband's labours of love, as he fulfilled the high mission to which he had been appointed—as the mother, training her little ones to usefulness and honour. But we will leave her now, assured that whatever storms may cloud the unshadowed morn of her wedded life—and all know that in this existence no home, however lofty or lowly, is exempt from suffering and trial—she bore a talisman to pass through all unscathed—strength, gained by patient endurance, and the knowledge of duties rightly performed.

It may be, dear lady—you who are now glancing idly over these pages—that you are surrounded by every luxury wealth can command. You are lounging, perhaps, upon a softly cushioned divan, with tiny, slippered feet half buried in the glowing carpet. There are brilliants blazing upon the delicate hand which shields your face from the warm fire-light; as you glance around,

a costly mirror reveals at full length your graceful and yielding form.

"I have no interest in such as these," you say, as the simple narrative is ended.

I pray, in truth, that you may never learn the harsh lessons of adversity; but remember, as you enjoy the elegancies of a luxurious home, that change comes to all when least expected. And if misfortune should not spare even one so young and so beautiful; if poverty or desolation overshadow the household, it may be your part to sustain and to strengthen, not only by words, but by deeds. God shield you, dear lady; but if the storm come, *remember that honest labour elevates, rather than degrades;* and those whose opinions are of value will not hesitate to confirm the truth of the moral.

“THERE’S NO SUCH WORD AS FAIL.”

THE proudest motto for the young!
Write it in lines of gold
Upon thy heart, and in thy mind
The stirring words enfold.
And in misfortune’s dreary hour,
Or fortune’s prosperous gale,
’Twill have a holy, cheering power,
“There’s no such word as fail.”

The Sailor, on the stormy sea,
May sigh for distant land;
And free and fearless though he be,
Would they were near the strand.
But when the storm on angry wings
Bears lightning, sleet, and hail,
He climbs the slippery mast, and sings
“There’s no such word as fail.”

The wearied Student, bending o'er
The tomes of other days,
And dwelling on their magic lore,
For inspiration prays.
And though with toil his brain is weak,
His brow is deadly pale,
The language of his heart will speak—
“There’s no such word as fail.”

The wily Statesman bends his knee
Before fame's glittering shrine,
And would an humble suppliant be
To Genius so divine.
Yet, though his progress is full slow,
And enemies may rail ;
He thinks at last the world to show
"There's no such word as fail."

The Soldier on the battle plain,
When thirsting to be free,
And throw aside a tyrant's chain,
Says—"On for Liberty !
Our households, and our native land !
We must, we will prevail !
Then foot to foot, and hand to hand,
"There's no such word as fail !'"'

The child of God, though oft beset
By foes without — within—
These precious words will ne'er forget,
Amid their dreadful din ;
But upward looks, with eye of faith,
Armed with the Christian's mail,
And in the hottest conflict saith—
"There's no such word as fail !'"'

THE STORY OF THE BELL.*

HE village was small, and the church was not a cathedral, but a quiet, unostentatious stone chapel, half covered by climbing plants, and a forest of dark trees grew around it.—They shaded the interior so completely in the summer afternoons, that the figure of the altar-piece—painted, the villagers averred, by Albrecht Dürer—could scarcely be distinguished, and rested upon the broad canvass a mass of shadowy outlines.

A quaint carved belfry rose above the trees, and in the bright dawn of the Sabbath, a chime sweet and holy floated from it, calling the villagers to their devotions; but the bell whose iron tongue gave forth that chime, was not the bell that my story speaks of—there was another, long before that was cast, that had hung for many years, perhaps a century, in the same place. But now it is no longer elevated, its tongue is mute, for it lies upon the ground at the foot of the church tower, broken and bruised. It is half buried in the rich mould, and there are green stains creeping over it, eating into its iron heart; no one heeds it now, for those who had brought it there are sleeping coldly and silently

* This little story has enjoyed a wide popularity under the disguise of a "Translation from the German, by Clara Cushman"—and we do our fair friend, the real author, only a simple act of justice by divesting it of its foreign appearance, and presenting it in its true character. It was a conceit of hers which sent it forth anonymously and "from the German," of which it is only a felicitous imitation—illustrating the flexibility of our noble Anglo Saxon tongue.—*So. Literary Gazette.*

all around in the church-yard. The shadow of those dark trees rests on many graves.

How came the old bell to be thus neglected? A new generation arose—"See," they said, "the church where our parents worshipped falls to decay. Its tower crumbles to dust. The bell has lost its silver tone—it sends forth a harsh dissonance. We will have a new tower, and another bell shall call us to our worship."

So the old belfry was destroyed, and the old bell laid at the foundation; it was grieved at the cruel sentence, but it scorned to complain, it was voiceless. They came weeks after to remove it—the remains would still be of use; but strive as they would, no strength was able to raise the bell; it had grown ponderous—it defied them—rooted to the earth as it seemed.

"They cannot make me leave my post," thought the bell—"I will still watch over this holy spot; it has been my care for years."

Time passed, and they strove no longer to remove the relic. Its successor rang clearly from the tower above its head, and the old bell slumbered on, in the warm sunshine, and the dreary storm, unmolested, and almost forgotten.

The afternoon was calm, but the sun's rays were most powerful. A bright, noble boy had been walking listlessly under the whispering trees. He was in high health and was resting from eager exercise, for there was a flush upon his open brow, and as he walked he wiped the beaded drops from his forehead.

"Ah, here is the place," he said; "I will lie down in this cool shade, and read this pleasant volume." The lays of Hans Sachs were in his hand. So the youth stretched his wearied limbs upon the velvet grass, and his head rested near the old bell,

but he did not know it, for there was a low shrub with thick serrated leaves and fragrant blossoms spreading over it, and the youth did not care to look beyond.

Presently the letters in his book began to grow indistinct, there was a mist creeping over the page, and while he wondered at the marvel, a low clear voice spoke to him. Yes, it called his name, "Novalis."

"I am here," said the lad, though he could see no one. He glanced upward, and around, yet there was no living creature in sight.

"Listen," said the voice. "I have not spoken to mortal for many, many years.—My voice was hushed at thy birth. Come, I will tell thee of it." The youth listened, though he was sadly amazed. He felt bound to the spot, and he could not close his ears.

"Time has passed swiftly," said the voice, "since I watched the children who are now men and women, at their sports in the neighbouring forest. I looked out from my station in the old tower, and morning and evening beheld with joy those innocent faces, as they ran and bounded in wild delight, fearless of the future, and careless of the present hour. They were all my children, for I had rejoiced at their birth, and if it was ordained that the Good Shepherd early called one of the lambs to his bosom, I tolled not mournfully, but solemnly, at the departure. I knew it was far better for those who slept thus peacefully, and I could not sorrow for them.

"I marked one, a fair, delicate girl, who often separated herself from her merry companions. She would leave their noisy play, and stealing with her book and work through the dark old trees, would sit for hours in the shadow of the tower. Though

she never came without a volume, such an one as just now you were reading, the book was often neglected, and leaning her head upon her hand, she would remain until the twilight tenderly veiled her beautiful form, wrapt in a deep, still musing. I knew that her thoughts were holy and pure; often of Heaven, for she would raise her eyes to the bending sky, jewelled as it was in the evening hour, and seem in prayer, though her lips moved not, and the listening breezes could not catch a murmuring word.

“But the girl grew up, innocent as in her childhood, yet with a rosier flush upon her cheeks and a brighter lustre in her dreamy eye. I did not see her so often then, but when my voice on the bright Sabbath morning called those who love the good Father to come and thank him for his wondrous mercy and goodness, she was the first to obey the summons, and I watched the snowy drapery which she always wore, as it fluttered by the dark foliage, or gleamed in the glad sunshine. She did not come alone, for her grandsire ever leaned upon her arm, and she guided his uncertain steps, and listened earnestly to the words of wisdom which he spoke. Then I marked that often another joined the group, a youth who had been her companion years agone, when she was a very child. Now, they did not stray as then, with arms entwined, and hand linked in hand; but the youth supported the grandsire, and she walked beside him, looking timidly upon the ground, and if by chance he spoke to her, a bright glow would arise to her lips and forehead.

“Never did my voice ring out for a merrier bridal than on the morn when they were united, before the altar of this very church. All the village rejoiced with them, for the gentle girl was loved as a sister, and a daughter; all said that the youth to whom she

had plighted her troth, was well worthy of the jewel he had gained. The old praised, and the young admired as the bridal party turned toward their home, a simple, vine-shaded cottage, not a stone's-throw from where thou art lying. They did not forget the God who had bestowed so much of happiness upon them, even in the midst of pleasure, and often they would come in the hush of twilight, and, kneeling by the altar, give thanks for all the mercies they had received.

"Two years—long as the period may seem to youth—glides swiftly past when the heart is at rest. Then once more a chime floated from the belfry. It was at early dawn, when the mist was lying on the mountain's side, and the dew hid trembling in the flower-bells, frightened by the first beams of the rising day. A son had been given to them, a bright, healthful babe, with eyes blue as the mother's who clasped him to her breast, and dedicated him with his first breath to the parent who had watched over her orphaned youth, and had given this treasure to her keeping.

"That bright day faded, and even came sadly upon the face of nature. Deep and mournful was the tone which I flung upon the passing wind; and the fir-trees of the forest sent back a moan from their swaying branches, heavily swaying, as if for very sympathy. Life was that day given, but another had been recalled. The young mother's deep sleep was not broken even by the wailing voice of her first-born, for it was the repose of death.

"They laid her beside the very spot where she had passed so many hours; and then I knew it was the grave of her parents which she had so loved to visit.

“The son lived, and the father's grief abated, when he saw

the boy growing in the image of his mother ; and when the child, with uncertain footsteps, had dared to tread upon the velvet grass, the father brought him to the church-yard, and clasping his little hands as he knelt beside him, taught the babe that he had also a Father in heaven.

“ I have lain since that time almost by her side, for my pride was humbled, when they removed me from the station I had so long occupied. My voice has been hushed from that sorrowful night even till now, but I am compelled to speak to thee.

“ Boy ! boy ! *it is thy mother* of whom I have told thee ! Two lives were given for thine ; thy mother, who brought thee into the world — thy Saviour, who would give thee a second birth — they have died that thou might live ; and for so great a sacrifice how much will be required of thee ! See to it, that thou art not found wanting when a reckoning is demanded of thee.”

Suddenly as it had been borne to his ears, the voice became silent. The boy started, as if from deep sleep, and put his hand to his brow. The dew lay damply upon it,—the shades of evening had crept over the churchyard ; and he could scarce discern the white slab that marked the resting-place of his mother. It may have been a dream — but when he searched about him for the old bell, it was lying with its lip very near to the fragrant pillow upon which he had reposed.

Thoughtfully and slowly the boy went toward his home, but though he told none, not even his father, what had befallen him, the story of the old bell was never forgotten, and his future life was influenced by the remembrance.

VOICES FROM FLOWERS.

A WOMANLY love is the love of flowers,
With their soft and rich perfume,
'T is a graceful task to rear and guard
Young plants as they bud and bloom;
And flowers can speak as in olden time,
Though no audible voices thrill,
Their velvet lips are not moved apart,
Yet their words can the silence fill.

This campion rose is a messenger
To tell of a Southern clime;
The orange buds bear in their snowy bells
The tones of a bridal chime.
The violet whispers of modest worth,
And see as a thought of Heaven
The amaranth bathed to its very heart
With the purple hues of even!

I have blossoms withering now and sere
That told me of love and truth,
They were offered by one who early claimed
The friendship of trusting youth.

The buds are faded, the leaves are brown,
But I prize and treasure them yet,
Though tears will fall as they meet my gaze,
Recalling a fond regret.

For a common weed, with its pale, blue cup,
Is twined with that very flower,
It knew no nurture from gentle hands,
It grew in no garden bower.

'T was the first faint bloom 'mid the tangled grass
That grew on that friend's low grave,
Ah, little we thought when the first were given
How soon should the last one wave.

And yet a message of Hope was breathed
From each fragile and tender leaf,
That came as a "voice from the Spirit Land"
To solace my heart's wild grief;
It seemed as a type of the second life
As it bloomed where no foot had trod,
For its petals bore the blue of Heaven,
And it sprang from the lonely sod.

THE
SORROW OF THE ROSE.

"A white rose, delicate,
On a tall bough and straight,
Early comer—April comer,
Never waiting for the Summer."

MISS BARRETT.

"Say not, thou who art bereaved, 'There is no sorrow like unto mine.'" — FLAVEL.

HE Rose was certainly the most queenly flower in all that spacious garden.

Some say queenly, when they mean haughty; but our rose had nothing of haughtiness in the serenely proud air with which she received the homage of the dew, the sunshine, and the evening wind. These were her most loyal subjects; the gay humming-bird was certainly very inconstant in his allegiance, for often he would be found fluttering about the Campanula and the pale Lilies, when he should have been bending over her.

The Rose nodded carelessly, when the neighbouring Tulip whispered this, for she knew the Tulip was a sad gossip, and more than one suspected she was black at the heart, from envy of her royal friend.

Little did the Rose care for the desertion of the bright-winged bird. Did not the dew pay a fond tribute to her beauty every evening, and when the morning sun crept with red rays to her

very heart, were not the pearly drops changed to brilliants, that glittered and flashed amid the pure petals she unfolded to its kiss?

“Our Queen’s tiara is renewed every morning,” whispered the amiable Mignonette. Mignonette found something to love and to admire in every one, down to the poor Bird-Weed that crept humbly near her.

“A thousand pities that more Mignonette had not been scattered through the garden,” said the Marigold—a nice, stout, motherly friend of Mignonette’s, who was always nursing the fragile Sensitive Plant, over whom she declared Monk’s Hood held a baleful influence.

Marigold often told her quiet friend Sage, that she believed the Sensitive Plant would be strong and healthy enough, if once removed from the shadow of that cold, dark neighbour.

So much for the gossip of the garden, which now and then went on pretty briskly, much to the annoyance of the Lupine, who liked to be quiet, and who bore a hatred to Narcissus on that very account.—Narcissus was always boasting about himself, and repeating the fine things he had heard said in his praise.

The Nettle was once so bitter as to say he believed Narcissus imagined half of what he was so constantly repeating.

Still, as we have said, all this gossip affected the Rose very little. True, she was grieved that any one should be pained by it; and she knew that, being one of the most conspicuous flowers, she often had her share of ill-natured remark. Calm indifference was the best shield, after all.—She knew the purity of her petals was quite unimpeachable, and, let them say what they would, could not thus be soiled. So she smiled serenely above the discord, and grew every day more beautiful and well-beloved.

Ay, and happier, for close to the soft moss that enveloped her stem, she nursed two bright young buds, that bade fair to be in their turn beautiful and pure.

How caressingly she bent over them ! It was really delightful to see her watch and note the faintest shadow of a change that crept over their young lives. Soon their white petals would burst through their emerald clasping, and then they would unfold *so* quickly, to be her friends, her companions ! One developed more rapidly than the other ; it was kissed oftener by the morning sunbeams ; and all know there is much of life in those fresh, fraternal kisses. The rough moss and delicate emerald leaves gave way before them. Yes, it was true, the bud was unfolding ; there were the waxen petals peeping forth ; one could almost see the delicate blush that deepened upon them at the praises of the surrounding blossoms.

All agreed it was the most beautiful bud of the season.

And the Rose—oh ! she had quite forgotten herself in her love and admiration of the fragile nursling that clung so fondly to her stem ! She was never weary of bending down to shade it from the noontide heat, and she shared with it the evening tribute of dew. Its younger sister was not forgotten—but her quieter loveliness was naught, when compared with the peerless favourite ! The Rose forgot that her own beauty was waning—that she no longer possessed the grace of youth, and was slowly withering in her prime.

She lived again ; she would live on, in this, her beautiful bud.

We had forgotten to tell you, that a tribute was required at stated seasons, by the owner of the garden. It was cared for, and nurtured by her kindness, and the only return she required was, that the flowers should thrive, and should be willing, at her

wish, to yield up some from among their number to her peculiar control. No one knew what afterwards became of them, as the blossoms never returned. They had questioned many things, but no certain reply had ever been given them, though the zephyrs and the moonlight both assured them that it was an honour to be so chosen; and a tradition existed among them that those who left their number were far happier than when in their midst. Yet, after all, they shrunk from the change; it was so uncertain, they said, and in the garden there were many companions and friends—much to make them happy, even if they were sometimes exposed to mildew, and the attacks of intrusive insects.

Now and then you would find a blossom not only willing, but indeed eager to be chosen. Some because they were weary of the inactive life they led, or because they knew a worm was gnawing at their root, that would destroy them if they were not speedily rescued. But others there were, perfect still in their young freshness, and fearing neither worm nor blight, who bowed in quiet peace to the sunimons, because they were grateful for the kindness that had so long nurtured them, and were ready to yield their first fragrance, ay, and even their lives, if required, as a small return for such benevolent guardianship.

A gentle hand hovered over the Rose; a quick, wild pang, that curdled her very life, and she saw her beautiful bud was no longer near her—that pang was in token of their separation.

Never was there such wild sorrow. The Rose rocked to and fro, in deepest grief. A low wailing fell heavily upon the air, unheard by any save those friends who strove in vain to comfort her. One by one, her petals drooped heavily; a cold dampness settled upon every leaf. In vain came the dew, with soft and

healing ministry; the light kiss of the sunshine brought no life; the whisper of the evening wind failed to rouse her from the fearful stupor.

The remaining bud blossomed to rare loveliness unheeded. It was paler than the last one, as if in sorrow at its departure; but there was a hue of more exquisite purity about it, that atoned for the absence of that crimson flush which had rendered the other so proudly fair. But the Rose could not see its beauty—blinded by the tears she had shed for her first darling.

The wailing of the Rose was unheard—nay, *seemingly* unheard. There was a soft, tranquil evening, when the whole garden was bathed in the smile of the calm moonlight. The flowers all loved the moonlight; it came to them so peacefully. Now and then, a leaf or a spray fluttered tremulously, but all else was hushed in a perfect rest.

Still the Rose wailed on.

The moonlight but reminded her of the many hours she had watched the lost one by its mild light. The grief she cherished had a strange effect: all that had ever been beautiful in life before, now grew dark, in proportion to its former brightness. Some mournful reminiscence clung to the fairest scene, the softest perfume. So she closed her heart to all healing influences, and “refused to be comforted.”

A softer whisper than that of the night-wind startled her. It was a voice she had never heard before—one so thrillingly low and sweet, that she hushed her moaning to listen.

“What! murmuring still!” said the voice. “Wrapt even until now in selfish, unholy repining! thou, once standing serenely in a pure content! Rose, Rose, thy purity waneth with every lament; thy tears have become as a mildew and a canker to

thine own breast, and to those who have ever looked up to thee for shelter! See, their dropping has paled the Lily at thy feet, and the heavy-lidded Violets sorrow with and for thee. Look around — rouse thee, selfish one, and mark those who have been like thee bereaved. The Eglantine still sends forth a grateful perfume, though its richest sprays have been removed. The Harebell bent patiently, as its fairest buds were taken; and the blue Hyacinth yields not to despair, though its last cluster of pale blossoms was bound with the bud which thou mournest. *It was not thine only one!* But I pity thee, child of my fairest summer hours, and I am permitted to bring before thee two scenes, that thou mayest draw from them consolation and hope. Mark them well, and hush the voice of wailing that drew me hither."

So the voice died silently, and the Rose bowed in very humiliation of spirit, for she saw that she had not suffered alone.— Then a deep sleep came wafted on the breath of the poppy, that floated about her, and the garden faded from view.

There were many lights flashing through the brilliant rooms upon which she looked. Soft music, such as she had never dreamed of, stole out to meet her. Laughter, musical, silver laughter, mingled with the strain, and bright eyes flashed, and red lips smiled, in the crowd gathered near the mistress of the mansion. Oh! how very beautiful was that stately woman, with a cloud of white drapery floating about her, and her dark hair banded in rich braids, unornamented but by a single rose — nay, a half-opened bud. The Rose saw, with a thrill of delight, that her darling had been thus preferred; and then the scene faded.

A damp, chill wind seemed to destroy her with its breath. A hoarse murmur ran through the dark heavens, that scowled

angrily over the garden; but her bud was returned to her, with its loveliness increased tenfold; and in that joy, all else was forgotten. Then the wild wind severed them again; they were torn rudely asunder, and the bud was lying at her feet, crushed to the ground, withering, dying, unhonoured and uncared-for. The dark earth-stains had destroyed its beauty—and so it perished.

“Which wouldst thou have chosen?” whispered the voice once more.

And the Rose replied humbly to the Flower-Spirit—for now she knew with whom she held converse—and said:

“I am content. Thou art wiser than I.”

And there was much to comfort the Rose, now that the voice of affection was heeded. One beautiful bud still remained—the dew, the sunlight, and the soft wind that came to her as of old—and, above all, she remembered that through her sorrow she had first known the voice of the gentle Spirit, who watched above them all, and would not “grieve or afflict them willingly.”

A LIFE HISTORY.

THE BRIDE'S CONFESSION.

A SUDDEN thrill passed through my heart,
Wild and intense—yet not of pain—
I strove to quell quick, bounding throbs,
And scanned the sentence o'er again.
It might have been most idly penned
By one whose thoughts from love were free,
And yet, as if entranced, I read
“Thou art most beautiful to me.”

Thou did'st not whisper I was dear—
There were no gleams of tenderness,
Save those my trembling heart *would* hope
That careless sentence might express.
But while the blinding tears fell fast,
Until the words I scarce could see,
There shone, as through a wreathing mist,
“Thou art most beautiful to me.”

To thee! I cared not for all eyes,
So I was beautiful in thine;
A timid star, my faint, sad beams,
Upon *thy* path alone should shine.
Oh, what was praise, save from thy lips—
And love should all unheeded be,
So I could hear thy blessed voice
Say—"Thou art beautiful to me."

And I *have heard* those very words—
Blushing beneath thine earnest gaze—
Though thou, perchance, hadst quite forgot
They had been said in by-gone days.
While clasped hand, and circling arm,
Drew me still nearer unto thee—
Thy low voice breathed upon mine ear,
Thou, love, art beautiful to me."

And, dearest, though thine eyes alone
May see in me a single grace—
I care not, so thou e'er canst find
A hidden sweetness in my face.
And if, as years and cares steal on,
Even that lingering light must flee,
What matter! if from thee I hear
"Thou art *still* beautiful to me!"

II

OLD LETTERS.

THROUGH her tears she gazed upon them,
Records of that brief bright dream !
And she clasped them closer—closer—
For a message they would seem
Coming from the lips now silent—
Coming from a hand now cold,
And she felt the same emotion
They had thrilled her with of old :

Blended with a holy grieving—
Blended with a throbbing pain—
For she knew the hand that penned them
Might not clasp her own again.
And she felt the desolation
That had fallen on her heart ;
Bitter memories thronged around her,
Bitter murmurs would upstart.

She had waited for their coming,
She had kissed them o'er and o'er—
And they were so fondly treasured,
For the words of love they bore.
Words that whispered in the silence,
She had listened till his tone
Seemed to linger in the echo,
“ Darling, thou art all mine own ! ”

Faster still the tears came falling
Through her white and wasted hands,
Where the marriage-ring—the widow's—
Linked their slender golden bands.
Sobs half stifled still were struggling
Through her pale and parted lips;
Oh, her beauty with life's brightness
Suffered a most drear eclipse!

Slowly folding, how she lingered
O'er the words his hands had traced!
Though the plashing drops had fallen,
And the faint lines half effaced.
“Gone for ever—oh, *for ever!*”
Murmured she with wailing cry—
Ah, too true, for through the silence
Came no voice to give reply.

It is passed. The sob is stifled—
Quivering lips are wreathed with smiles,
Mocking with their strange deceiving,
Watchful love she thus beguiles—
With the thought that o'er her spirit
Sorrow's shadow scarce is thrown;
For those letters have a message
To her heart, and her's alone.

III.

A MEMORY.

“At the door you will not enter,
I have gazed too long,—adieu !
Hope withdraws her peradventure,
Death is near me and not you.”

MISS BARRETT.

SLOWLY fades the misty twilight,
O'er the thronged and noisy town ;
Clouds are gathered in the distance,
And the clouds above it frown.
Yet before her, leaves swayed lightly
In the hushed and drowsy air,
And the trees reclothed in verdure,
Had no murmur of despair.

She had gazed into the darkness,
Seeking through the busy crowd,
For a form once pressing onward
With a step as firm and proud.
For a face upturned in gladness
To the window where she leaned —
Smiling with an eager welcome,
Though a step but intervened.

A MEMORY.

Even now her cheek is flushing
With the rapture of that gaze;
And her heart as then beats wildly—
 Oh, the memory of those days!
As a dear, dear dream it cometh,
 Swiftly as a dream it flies!
No one springeth now toward her,
 Smiling with such earnest eyes.

No one hastens home at twilight,
 Watching for her hand to wave;
For the form she seeks so vainly
 Sleeps within the silent grave;
And the eyes have smiled in dying,
 Blessing her with latest life,
Smiled in closing o'er the discord
 Of the last wild earthly strife.

IDEAL HUSBANDS;

OR,

SCHOOL-GIRL FANCIES.

CHAPTER I.

Miss Juliet Capulet was mistaken. There is undoubtedly *much* in a name.—*Charcoal Sketches.*

“True love is at home on a carpet,
And mightily likes his ease;
True love has an eye for a dinner,
And starves under shady trees.”

N. P. WILLIS.

ET me usher you, without ceremony, dear ladies, into No. 20, a commodious apartment on the first floor of a wayside inn. It is undoubtedly the pleasantest room in the house, and, at this moment, is enlivened by the presence of two young and beautiful girls. There are huge travelling-trunks and carpet-bags, yawning wide-mouthed; for the ladies are just completing the fatiguing process of packing. Thus far they have journeyed in company, but now their paths separate; and as they have been room-mates at school for two years, you can imagine there is much to be said on both sides.

“Clara,” said the younger, a bright-eyed maiden “just seventeen,” “is n’t it time to dress? The stage leaves in an hour, I

heard the waiter say. You do my hair, and then I'll braid yours. We shall not have a chance to play waiting-maid for each other very soon again."

"True; but don't forget your promise, that I am to be your bridesmaid," was the reply.

"Nonsense," said the other—blushing, nevertheless, as young girls will when the subject is thus brought home to them; "you will need my services first, Clara. You are older than I."

"But you are prettier than I, Ella."

"You flatterer!" and the curls Ella had gathered over her little white hands were suffered to fall caressingly about her friend's face.

"Besides," continued Clara Howard, "you are an heiress; and I"—her red lip curled scornfully—"I am dependent upon a stepfather for the very necessities of existence."

"How can you say 'dependent' so bitterly, when you know how kindly he speaks of you, and loves you, I am sure?"

"Yes, I know he loves me; but his own large family are to be provided for; and so, you see, puss, I lack one of the essential qualifications to the estate matrimonial. What were you telling me about Mr. Huntington? I was so busy then."

"Oh, only Frank says he will join our party (I can say *our* party this year) at the Mountain House; and, you know, I have wanted to meet him so long. I wonder if he will like me?" she added, musingly.

"He is certain to do so, if he once sees you. And, Ella, I declare, you are half in love with him already. Your sister evidently thinks him perfection."

"You know he was her husband's friend for years, Clara; and—I wonder how he looks," the young girl said abruptly. "Strange, Agnes has never described him to me!"

"She wishes you to be surprised. I have no doubt he is a splendid fellow."

"Oh, he must be. Tall—yes, I am sure he is tall. I never could endure short men. Then, he has jet black whiskers and a mustache. And his hair must wave; not curl, but wave a little over his brow. He must have a beautiful mouth, too, or I am sure I could not like him. Clara, positively, I never *could* marry a man who was not tall and graceful, with dark eyes and whiskers, and a perfect mouth. Yes, and an aristocratic name he must have, too, or I never could consent to change my own for his. 'Ella Kirkland' is far too pretty to be lost in Smith, or Jones, or Thompson. Let me think: Huntington—it's a beautiful name, isn't it?"

"Yes, Ella Huntington is not so bad. But I don't care a fig for a name, so a man is wealthy. I believe I would marry plain John Jones, if he was as ugly as poor Jackson with his red hair and weak eyes, provided plain John Jones had five thousand a year."

"Oh, Clara, don't talk in that way; I know you are only joking. But then——"

"No, I'm not joking," retorted the other, firmly, almost fiercely.

Poor girl! she is not the only woman of her age who considers wealth an essential to domestic happiness. She had been reared with luxurious tastes and habits; but the wealth that supplied the one and fostered the other, had not been her own; and the taunts of her mother's step-children had only created a desire for a fortune under her own control, that she might outshine those who were her superiors only in the wealth she so coveted. But Clara Howard is not our heroine, beautiful as she certainly was,

and amiable as she might have been but for this plague-spot that burned upon her heart. We will bid her farewell, as did her late schoolmate, at the door of the splendid equipage long waiting for the "little heiress," a *sobriquet* Ella had borne through her residence at the seminary of Madame Chapron.

Clara Howard's red lip curled once more, as a lumbering stage-coach soon after took its place. It was to bear her to the next large town, where her stepfather awaited her.

So we turn from Clara's scheming heart, that plans only that it may fetter itself with golden chains, to the bounding hopes and bright anticipations Ella Kirkland is now pouring into the ear of Frank Clinton, the husband of her only sister Agnes. She was talking of Mr. Huntington as they rode along. She should be *so* delighted to meet him! Was he tall?

"Yes."

"And fine-looking?"

Ella was bidden to prepare for disappointment.

"Then he is ugly, after all!"

No; her brother did not say that; but she would not meet Mr. Huntington, at least, this season. He had, "unfortunately, been obliged——"

Ella did not wait to hear any more. "It was too bad, after all her sister had written!" It was strange how soon Ella grew weary after this, though scarcely one-third of their way was passed. She did not tell Mr. Clinton all that she had intended about their examination, and how her new songs had been so much admired; and that Clara Howard must be invited to pass the winter with them. However, that recalled their last conversation, and then she repeated it to—a part of it, at least;

for she did not tell of her "trying on" Mr. Huntington's name, to her amused and patient listener.

"So, my little Ella would never, positively *never*, marry a man by the name of Smith. What would she think of Brown?"

"Oh, horrid! that was quite as bad. No; she was willing to repeat it: if a man was ever so rich," (though, to be sure, that made little difference,) "or ever so tall," (a much more important consideration in the eyes of the little lady,) "or ever so handsome or intellectual, those horrid names, Brown, or Smith, or Jones, would outweigh his attractions." She wondered how Clara *could* think so much of money. *Wealth* was nothing; but *her* future lord *must* have an aristocratic name.

How merrily Frank Clinton laughed; and then Ellen pouted; and at last he grew thoughtful, and she grew stupid; so, as if by mutual consent, they fell back on the soft cushions, and neither spoke for miles of that pleasant journey.

CHAPTER II.

"The parlours, both, are occupied,
And every other spot,
By couples who a-eourting seem,
And yet, perhaps they 're not."

MISS LESLIE.

HERE was a gay group assembled in the drawing-room at the Catskill Mountain House, on the evening after Ella Kirkland's arrival. The house was thronged with visitors; and, as usual, gossip and flirtation formed the principal amusement of the crowds thus gathered together for the laudable purpose of killing time.

Mrs. Clinton passed quietly through the larger room, and entered the little *boudoir*, which all who have visited this delightful summer resort must recollect. Ah! how many flirtations has that mirror witnessed! How many a flushed cheek has been shaded by those light muslin curtains! How many a restless heart, filled with hope, mortification, ay, even *despair*, has throbbed against those soft lounges, that reveal no secrets!—fortunately for the peace of mind of some we wot of. Ella did not think of this, as she entered the room; but she was a young lady going into society for the first time, unshackled by the thoughts of a return to school duties, and everything was novel and delightful. She looked around with eager interest, as Mrs. Clinton pointed out her acquaintances in the room beyond.

"There is Mrs. McClure," said Agnes, "the lady with the quiet, thoughtful face, and braided hair. You will like her, I know. She is still in mourning for her husband, who died several years since; and those little fairies bidding her good-night are her children. Mrs. Newland is at the other end of the sofa; she is her sister, a widow also; but her daughters are older, quite young ladies. There is one of them at the piano. She is lady-like, quiet, and self-possessed;—a widow content to remain so, though in the prime of life. There is Mr. Dickson, an unassuming and gentlemanly man. Mrs. Orton, the poetess, is now in conversation with him. Is she not a graceful little creature?"

Ella looked with admiration on one she had heard so much of, and whose writings she had loved from childhood.

"I will finish my catalogue to-morrow," continued Mrs. Clinton. "No, stop; there comes Bradbury; you must know him. One of the best fellows in the world; high-principled, warm-

hearted, generous to a fault. Somewhat extravagant, I fear, and a little vain ; but these are faults of youth, which he will have good sense enough to conquer as he grows older. And here is the greatest curiosity in the whole menagerie. Not a lion, exactly —a bear would answer better ; that is, I am always tempted to think of Frederika Bremer's 'Bear,' in her charming 'Neighbours,' whenever I see him ; so, you see, the epithet is a compliment, after all. Did you not notice Frank rush down when the stage came in ? Well, it was to meet that man who sits so contentedly gazing in at the window from the piazza ; his feet perched up on the top of the rail, *à la Americane*. Respectable feet they are, too, for a man of his size. He must be at least six feet in height. He is a great friend of Frank's ; and a new-comer, as well as yourself. You would find his name on the register just below yours, as Walter Brown, of Arkansas. Is not that enough to startle one ! Such a backwoodsman ! But I will leave you to find out his 'points and paces,' as the sportsmen say, yourself. 'You will be sure to like him.'

"Impossible !" said Ella, hastily. "I never could endure the name. Besides, he must be a perfect savage, coming from such a place. What *can* Frank find to like in him ? Such a name ! *Brown* ! I wonder if he will ever find any one to marry him ?"

"Report says that one lady has already been so rash—that he is a widower ; but he denies it. Report adds that he is looking out for some one to fill her place. He would probably deny that, too, if it came to his ears. A chance for you, Ella, if it is true."

"Horrid !" said Ella, scornfully. "I marry a man with the name of *Brown* !"

"Good evening, Mrs. Clinton," said a voice near them.

Ella started, as if a whole Fourth of July of fire-works had suddenly exploded at her feet. She had turned away while they were talking, and had not seen any one approaching them. There stood Mr. Brown, within a yard of the sofa on which she was lounging. Her face flushed in an instant. Had he overheard her remark? She hoped not; but she could not tell. He was quite self-possessed; and, after an introduction, seated himself near her, although he addressed his conversation to Mrs. Clinton. Dear me, how ugly he is!" she thought; for though his intonation was perfect, and his voice was musical, no one could deny that it came from a large, very large, mouth. Then his forehead was sunburned; and his nose, though not badly shaped, had an undue tinge of "love's proper hue," from like exposure. Besides, as a tall man, he was certainly not strikingly graceful—at least, in repose.

Ella rose to obey her brother's summons to the piano. She sang simple ballads, with much expression; and Frank was fond of ballad-singing, particularly in contrast to the "opera gems" the city ladies were constantly strumming. Frank had little love for Bellini and Donizetti out of the opera-house. At any rate, not as performed by boarding-school misses.

Not once did Mr. Brown look up. Provoking Mr. Brown! Although Ella well knew, from his very face, that he could not have a particle of music in him. He sat quite still, apparently absorbed in admiration of the large, filbert-shaped nails of his really tolerable hand. Every one else crowded around the piano, and thanked the fair musician; for, although Ella's voice was neither brilliant nor powerful, there was a peculiar freshness of style, and a freedom from affectation in voice and intonation that

pleased those who could also admire and appreciate more elaborate execution.

So Ella sang on, urged by Mr. Bradbury and Mr. Dickson, who had been presented to her by Frank. And they all went out upon the piazza together, and strolled up and down in the soft moonlight—all but Mr. Brown, who engaged Mrs. McClure in an animated conversation, and did not even glance up at the window, as the group outside passed and re-passed. Ella was glad of this, for somehow she had taken an unaccountable dislike to Mr. Brown.

CHAPTER III.

“Sunrise upon the hills!”

“Love may slumber in a maiden’s heart, but he always dreams.”—
JEAN PAUL.



HOSE of our readers who have had the good fortune to watch a clear sunrise from the piazza of the Mountain House, will not wonder that our little heroine stood absorbed in the view before her.

She was quite alone, for Mrs. Clinton had become more fond of her morning nap, than of watching a scene grown familiar. Her husband had fulfilled his promise of calling Ella in season; and he, too, loved morning dreams.

A group of new *arrivals* stood a few rods from the house, upon the dew-covered grass; but Frank had forbidden his charge

to set foot beside them, on pain of a heavy cold. So Ella stood there, as pretty a picture as one could wish to see, with one arm twined about a pillar, and her light morning-dress fluttering in graceful drapery about her; but, rapt in quiet admiration of the slowly changing scene, she did not once dream of how she was looking, and wondered why the gentlemen of the aforesaid party turned so often toward the house.

Slowly the crimson rays stole to the heart of the dim clouds that rested on the crest of far-away Mount Washington. First, a faint rose-tinge trembled through the ragged edges; deeper, richer grew the radiance, until all glorious hues were blended in its inmost folds. A golden light played o'er the bending horizon; a mellow radiance that faded at last to faintest sapphire. So day came on, proudly, rejoicingly. The vapoury masses that filled the valley below, trembled as the first sunbeams fell among them; and then fled, like a discomfited host pierced by the glittering lances of an enemy. Miles away the beautiful Hudson sparkled and dashed its mimic waves on sloping, wood-crowned banks; and near them the proud summits of the Catskills became more distinctly defined against a cloudless sky.

"Heavens! how beautiful!" murmured the young girl, as she gazed eagerly upward and around. There was such a freshness in the clear atmosphere, such a "subtle luxury" in its very breath! She did not know that it had deepened the rose tint on her cheeks, and given a clear brightness to her large dark eyes; and when a voice near her echoed "Beautiful, indeed!" she little dreamed that *she* was the object of such enthusiasm.

But it startled her, mellow as was the tone; and she turned hastily to see—Mr. Brown! standing near

For an instant, she was vexed. If it had been Mr. Bradbury,

now, such an interruption would have been far from disagreeable; or Mr. Dickson, even. Her heart was so full, that she longed to give vent to her rapture in words; but disagreeable Mr. Brown, of all people, to come between her and that glorious sunrise!

However, he came forward so frankly to bid her good morning, and spoke so charmingly of the different atmospheric effects about them; and, withal, displayed unconsciously so much artistic skill and taste, that Ella could not but be interested in the conversation; and so an hour passed quite swiftly, and she was surprised to hear the dressing-bell ring so suddenly. As she bade Mr. Brown good morning, and turned to her own room, she came to the conclusion that he was a professional artist; but then the arts are not particularly cherished in Arkansas.

Mrs. Clinton was confined to her room that morning by a slight indisposition. Frank sat beside her, as a kind husband should do, reading aloud from a new romance. Ella had hurried through it the week before; so, as all the rest of the household seemed to have gone to the falls or to their rooms, she stole off to the drawing-room, resolved to have what school-girls call "a good practice." Fortunately, it was empty; and, unrestrained by listeners, Ella gave full scope to her bird-like voice, singing anything she chanced to remember—among other simple strains, the sweet ballad of "Bonnie Annie Lowrie." As she finished the refrain, Mr. Brown came slowly forward from the little boudoir we have spoken of.

Ella blushed— vexed at having had a listener to her wild cadenzas— half rose from the music-stool, and then sat down again, turning over nervously a song of Jenny Lind's that was open before her.

"There is one consolation," thought she; "he is no musician, and will not know whether I have been singing false or not."

Sadly mistaken was Ella Kirkland; and so she found, when Mr. Brown spoke of "Annie Lowrie," and begged her to sing it once more. Then they chatted of Scotch and Irish songs, of Moore's Melodies, and Mrs. Norton's delightful ballads. It was very strange he liked all her old favourites; and, at last, as she was playing "Fairy Bells," her astonishment reached its climax as he joined her carelessly with a most agreeable tenor. Then he suggested some little alterations in her style and tone; and so they sang and chatted a long time—Ella was surprised to find how long, as she looked at her watch on her way to Mrs. Clinton's room.

Yet she was vexed at her sister's raillery when recounting the adventures of the morning, and wondered how she could dream of teasing her about any one named Brown, and with no mustache either! Mr. Brown had not even whiskers! Then such a mouth! No; Ella declared that, until the legislature had done something for his name, and surgical science had found a method for improving ugly mouths, her heart was in no danger.

So she changed the topic of conversation, by inquiring how long they were going to stay among the mountains, and why Mr. Huntington did not join them. It was too provoking! Mr. Huntington seemed to elude her, as if he had been Peter Schlemihl himself! No sooner did she expect to meet him, than, presto! something must happen to disturb their plans. Her sister smiled, probably at her pettish tone; but pettishness was not an unpleasant expression on Ella's face; her eyes seemed always to grow brighter, and her red lips pouted so *kissably*—at least, so Frank always said.

Thus interrogated, Mrs. Clinton replied that their stay would be four weeks at least; for she certainly found it the coolest place they had visited that season; and the house was well kept, the company decidedly *recherché*. As to Mr. Huntington, all was doubtful; he might not make his appearance at all, or, if he came, it would probably be the very last week of their stay. Then she went on to praise Mr. Huntington, his fine intellect, taste, and address. Moreover, his firm principles and great moral excellence had been well tested in their long and intimate friendship. Mrs. Clinton did not say, but she hinted how happy it would make them all to see Ellen the wife of such a man; and her listener's heart beat fast; for—shall we let you into Ella's secrets?—she had long loved an ideal Mr. Huntington. For two years past, her sister's letters had spoken of their friend in no measured terms of praise; and, unconsciously to herself, he had become “her thought by day, her dream by night.”

“Very improper!” whispers some prudish maiden. But, lady, woman's heart craves an object for its affection; and better let it be wasted upon a noble ideal than a worthless, characterless reality, as “first lovers” oftentimes prove.

This will explain Ella's sore disappointment at not meeting Mr. Huntington, and why she listened with so much pleasure to her sister's praise.

As she stood before her mirror that afternoon, braiding her heavy hair, she caught a glimpse of the face shaded by it, and wondered if Mr. Huntington would think her pretty. Then she recollects that Mrs. Clinton had not yet described him, and she resolved to ask a portrait that very evening. “But, of course,” thought Ella, “he has magnificent dark eyes; and such a noble forehead! I do hope he is tall!” for

Ella, like most ladies of medium height, had rather a peculiar admiration for tall gentlemen.

When they all re-assembled at the dinner-table, Ella found the seat next her assigned to Mr. Brown. At first, it made her a little uncomfortable; but his sparkling conversation soon put her at ease; and, at last, the large mouth grew more tolerable in consideration of the sweet voice and witty sayings. That evening, too, she found herself turning away from Mr. Dickson's quiet sarcasm, and Mr. Bradbury's good-natured comments on the assembled crowd, to listen again while Mr. Brown spoke of foreign lands in contrast with our own. He had already travelled much, and his descriptions were absolutely word-paintings. Besides, he seemed to have a wonderful knowledge of the world in its social aspect. This was betrayed quite naturally in the course of conversation with Frank Clinton. There was no ostentation of knowledge or pursuit; his friend knew well how to guide the current of conversation, and Mr. Brown seemed quite unconscious that he was so led. He rarely addressed Ella, but now and then he would turn suddenly toward her for sympathy with some noble sentiment, or approval of some graphic sketch; and, without knowing how well pleased she was, our heroine sat in a quiet, happy mood, wondering at his extensive information, and smiling at his lively sallies.

So passed the first day at the Mountain House; and so passed the next, and the next; varied now and then with a walk, a ride, a visit to the falls, or a merry bowling party. Ella had never been so happy before. She had almost ceased to wish for Mr. Huntington's presence, and actually reproached herself at the indifference with which she listened to Frank's wonders at the cause of his long detention.

CHAPTER IV.

Juliet. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.

Romeo. I take thee at thy word,
Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized :
Henceforth, I never will be Romeo.

SHAKSPEARE.



HEY were standing by the piano, quite alone, Ella and Mr. Brown. Almost unconsciously, they had fallen into a habit of practising directly after breakfast, when new visitors were gone to the falls, and the older guests sought their own rooms, or strolled up and down on the long, well-shaded piazza. Mr. Brown's voice harmonized so well with Ella's, that their duets were pronounced quite charming. With singing in the morning, chatting at dinner, bowling, dancing and walking together, they had become very good friends.

There is no place in which one grows well acquainted with character so soon as at the Mountain House. There is no other family to associate with ; you do not care always to join in the society of the house ; and so one's party become thoroughly well known to each other—far better known than by months of fashionable city visiting. Mr. Brown had attached himself to Frank Clinton's party ; and in all excursions where escort was needed, Ella fell to his care. What at first was accident, became a matter of course. Quiet Mrs. McClure yielded her place next

Ella, at his approach ; Mr. Dickson and Mr. Bradbury tacitly assented to the *tête-à-tête* arrangement in rides and rambles ; Frank Clinton and his wife smiled at the growing intimacy, but did not attempt to discountenance it. Mrs. Clinton well knew that her sister was in love with an ideal ; she seemed to have no fear of so plain a reality as Mr. Brown.

And Ella ?—she began to expect his approach whenever he entered the room. She scarcely concealed her disappointment if their practice hour was broken in upon ; she did not dream that she was deeply interested—only Mr. Brown had grown endurable. He was not so very ugly, after all. So she thought, the morning of which I speak, as they stood there in animated conversation.

"This will be our last practice for some time," said Mr. Brown, at length.

"And why?" asked Ella, hastily.

"I leave this afternoon," was the reply, "and my return is uncertain."

"Must you go?" said Ella, poutingly, beseechingly.

There was more in these few words, and in the tone in which they were spoken, than Ella herself was aware of ; but they thrilled on the ear of the listener.

"I have an only sister," said Mr. Brown, speaking in a low voice ; "I have not seen her for more than a year, and she has just arrived in the Caledonia. I must go to New York to meet her."

"Is she young? Is she beautiful? How you must love her!" murmured Ella, rather thinking than speaking.

"She is both young and beautiful ; not a day older than yourself, I imagine. Yes, I am very, very fond of her. She is the idol of our home circle. Rough as I am, even I have a pet

name for her. We were speaking of pet names yesterday, you recollect."

Yes, Ella recollected it distinctly. She had been repeating to him Mrs. Osgood's sweet little song, "Call me Pet Names, dearest."

"What dainty diminutive, think you, my huge mouth can fashion for our household fairy?"

Ella did not look up, but said she could not guess.

"'Darling,'" said Mr. Brown, softly; "I always call my sister *darling*! Do you like the word?"

Now, if Ella had one fancy over another, it was to be called "darling" by those who loved her. She did not like any one to call her so but those of whom she was very fond. She had never heard it so sweetly cadenced before. We have said that Mr. Brown's voice was peculiarly musical, and now there was so much of heart thrown into the lingering echo of that little word "darling!"

"I should think *you* would like it," said he, again speaking, when he found Ella neither looked up nor replied. "Forgive me, but you seem born to be petted."

And then Ella looked up, but her eyes speedily fell beneath the respectful yet earnest gaze that sent the blood crowding from her heart to cheek and lip, leaving the poor heart so faint that it could do nothing but flutter.

"We probably shall not meet alone again," said the same low voice, "so I will bid you good-by now. I hope we may see each other at some future period."

He extended his hand as he spoke, and Ella hesitatingly placed her own within its gentle clasp. "May God bless you, Miss Kirkland!" and she was standing alone.

She gained her own room, fastened the door instinctively, and then threw herself upon a low seat and buried her face in her hands. Now that tone, that look returned again and again. "Darling! If I could but hear him speak it to *me*!" she murmured, at length. And then she blushed, though quite alone with her own heart. What had she wished? The love of a stranger; that dearest of pet names from so ugly a mouth! Poor child! she had made a sad discovery; she loved unsought—and worse than all, one who bore so unaristocratic a name as Brown! A man with a smooth lip and a low brow! Where were those essential mustaches? the perfect mouth, that should have smiled upon her? After all, Mr. Brown's mouth had a very sweet expression, and his smile disclosed teeth of almost dazzling whiteness. His forehead was not high, but it was very pure; and his eyes, though blue—. Again the flush rose to her very brow. Was her love unsought, after all? He had not told her that she was dear to him, in words; but now, as she reviewed their daily intercourse of the past few weeks, she tried to persuade herself that he was not indifferent to her. But then he had left her so suddenly, without a word of explanation; and again all was chaos.

She scarcely looked up until Frank tapped at her door on his way to the dinner-table. She had heard the dressing-bell ring, and then she relapsed into the vague reverie which had before absorbed her; so she was still in her morning-dress.

"I have a headache; I do not wish any dinner," said she, without opening the door; and Frank, finding all expostulation vain, passed on.

Mrs. Clinton wondered what had made Ella so irritable that afternoon, and told her that Mr. Brown had been suddenly

obliged to leave for the city. "Will you not go down to the drawing-room and bid him good-bye?" she asked. No; Ella was obstinate, and Mrs. Clinton went alone. Ella stood, sheltered by the green blind of her window, and watched the passengers, one by one, as they bestowed themselves in the capacious stage-coach. Last of all, came a well-known form. Frank was with him. He gazed earnestly up at the window one moment; then, as if disappointed, sprang to his seat, and the carriage rattled away over its stony path.

Mrs. Clinton wondered still more at Ella's petulance, when she found how long it lasted. From being a gay, brilliant girl, the life of their pleasant evenings, she had become almost sullen in her reserve, and passed hours quite alone in her own room. Even the announcement of Mr. Huntington's expected arrival, at the end of the week, failed to rouse her. She reproached herself for it, but she could not help it. It was plain that the ideal had given place to the real.

"I suppose we shall leave for New York by Tuesday next," said Mrs. Clinton, one day, as they stood watching the stage, as it wound slowly toward the house. The coachman's bugle had roused the mountain echoes; and, as usual, all the loungers strolled to the back porch to criticise the new arrivals.

"Shall we?" said Ella, fairly roused to something like animation. "I'm very glad of it."

"I declare, Ella, you are a perfect enigma. Only a week ago—the very day before Mr. Brown left—you said this was a perfect paradise; that New York would be very stupid."

"I have a lady's privilege to change my mind," said Ella, somewhat tartly.

And then she uttered a half-smothered exclamation; for, as

the stage drew up at the door, she saw Mr. Brown leap eagerly from it, glancing up at the window as he did so.

Mrs. Clinton did not notice her sister's confusion. "Why, there is our friend," said she; and away she hurried to find Frank and go to meet him.

Ella delayed going down until the bell had sounded for the evening meal; and then she was comparatively collected, as she returned the formal greeting of the returned traveller.

"I found that my sister had already left the city for our southern home; and, as I shall be detained in New York a week later by business I cannot avoid, I ran up again to pay you a call."

Ella felt chilled and disappointed — she knew not why — so she grew silent and sad; not speaking, save when addressed, through all that long evening. She had gone out upon the piazza as it drew to a close — gone out alone, prompted by that undefined feeling of unrest that so often draws us away from the gayest scenes. She stood there, wondering why she was so unhappy; for tears came to her eyes as the pleasant laughter of the saloon floated out to her. Then she saw the subject of her thoughts step quietly through one of the long windows; and when she would have avoided him, his hand detained her while he hurriedly whispered, "Will you not grant me one request? I have a fancy that I should like to have one more walk with you before we go. I have Mrs. Clinton's permission that you should accompany me, if you choose. Will you go early, quite early to-morrow?"

Ella dared not look up, lest the secret of her heart should be unconsciously revealed. But she gave the promise, and glided away to her room.

It was very strange! What could he mean? But she had assented; and her sister reminded her of it as she called at the door to bid her good-night. Little did Ella sleep. Busy conjectures and undefined anticipations, half sad, half hopeful, came by turns; and it was long after midnight before the young girl was at rest.

She sprang up wildly from a strange, incoherent dream, just as the first ray of light crept in at the window. A hasty toilet was soon completed; for she stopped not to braid her luxuriant hair, confining it but by a single comb. She looked very sweetly, however, despite the want of ornament, as she tied on a light straw hat, and stole out upon the piazza; at least so thought our hero, who already waited for her. But he did not say so, though he *looked* his admiration, as he thanked her for her promptness. There was no eye to see them, as they left the house in the dim grey light; even the sunrise seekers were not astir.

I do not believe either of them knew what direction they were taking; but on they went, through lane and field, in the by-path to the falls. Neither spoke, save in monosyllables, for miles. Yes; for before they knew it, both were amazed to find they were near that place of resort.

At this early hour, the falls were not visible; for, be it known, most curious reader, that the stream once dashing wildly down the rocky amphitheatre, is now "made to turn a mill," and its tide is restrained until a sufficient number of visitors have arrived to make the exhibition profitable. Then, for the space of fifteen minutes, and for the consideration of a York shilling apiece, you may enjoy the magnificent scene. So much for the age we live in!

How heartily they laughed when they found how far they had come in that silent ramble, and at their own stupidity. That

laugh seemed to destroy the reserve that had arisen between them ; and when Mr. Brown proposed that, now they were there, they should descend to the bed of the stream — they would be rewarded by a bouquet of wild flowers, at least — Ellen gaily assented, in spite of the heavy dew — careless child ! — and bade Mr. Brown lead the way. By this time, it was fairly day upon the hills, although a deep shadow slept in the valley below them. In vain did Mr. Brown proffer his assistance in descending ; the giddy girl refused to accept it ; and, half vexed at the repeated refusals, he hurried down the steep declivity. He reached the end of the path in safety, and turned to look at the light form swinging so airily above him. As he did so, he saw one little foot placed upon a stone loosely embedded in the gravelly soil ; and before he could utter a cry of warning, the young girl fell. He saw a cloud of white drapery sweeping through the green foliage that obstructed the direct pathway ; he already felt the shock it was impossible to avert. There was a crash of the young branches near him, and Ella was lying almost at his feet. Her face was pale as the dead, while a small crimson stream ran slowly from the temple that rested on the sharp and rugged rock, against which she had fallen.

One bound, and she was in his arms, while he dashed the clear water of a neighbouring pool over that poor pale face. Could it be death ? so calmly, so rigidly she was lying upon his arm. Must she die ? So young — so well-beloved ! And he had killed her !

The rocks above them sent back his wild cry for help ; but no other answer was returned. The hour and the place rendered aid impossible. He prayed her to speak, but to unclose her eyes one instant ; and while no sound came to break the deathlike

stillness, it seemed as if hours were passing. At last there was a faint quiver of the white lips, a long, tremulous sigh, and he knew there was yet hope.

As consciousness slowly returned, Ella was aware of a strange clasping; then, above the ringing whirl that dizzied her brain, she heard a well-known voice say, "Darling! darling!" and there was almost agony in the tone. She could not remember what had happened; and she thought she was dreaming. But it was a blessed dream! And she laid perfectly still, unable to break the strange spell that bound her, and listening to that voice as once more it wildly said, "Darling!"

Then she unclosed her eyes; and as they smiled upwards, an unresisted kiss closed them again. But with returning strength, came fears and doubts; and with a strange agitation, Ella disengaged herself from the clasping arm of her companion, and said, faintly, "My sister,—Frank,—what will they say of this?"

"They know all, dear one; they have sanctioned my love long ere its acknowledgment. Tell me that you do not disdain me; say that, rude as I am—there is much more of the camp than the court about me, I confess—you will yet confide your happiness to my keeping. Tell me that you love me, Ella, even as I love you."

What think you was Ella Kirkland's reply? She laid back her head upon the heart of the speaker, and he felt no words were needed.

But the silence was broken when they began to talk of their return. How should they accomplish that steep ascent? the long walk that would then be before them? More than all, how enter the house in the sorry plight our heroine was now reduced to? Her lover thought she had never looked more

charmingly than at present, despite the dew-stained dress to which the damp earth still clung, and the wild disorder of her loosened hair. The richly-laced handkerchief bound about her bruised brow, was not an ungraceful head-dress. And how they both laughed at the awkward attempts Mr. Brown—no, Walter, for so he begged her to call him—made to assist Ella in binding up the wealth of tresses that flowed from beneath it.

But we must not linger on their return, short and pleasant as it seemed to both. Ella leaned helplessly and confidingly on the arm that was henceforth to shield her from life's ills. Fortunately, all were too deeply engaged at the breakfast-table to notice their entrance; and Ella saw no one until her sister ran hastily into the room ten minutes after.

"Mercy, Ella," she exclaimed, "can I believe the evidence of my own senses? Here I am told, in the same breath, that you have been carried over the falls, broken your neck, and then come to life again the pledged wife of a Mr. Brown! *Brown, Ella.* 'Horrid name!' And such a mouth, too! He never will be able to kiss your little face—never!"

"Where is the future Mrs. Brown, of Arkansas?" chimed Frank, opening the door. "Oh! Ella, such an unaristocratic name!"

Poor Ella! It was useless to expostulate; useless to stamp her tiny foot. Frank would not cease until his wife, in pity for Ella's blushes, sent him out of the room, and then listened kindly while the young girl told her all. But even yet she could not speak his name without faltering in tone; and though she was obliged to acknowledge it was foolish, she felt it a slight drawback on her present happiness. With Juliet, she was ready to exclaim, "Oh, Romeo, Romeo; wherefore art thou Romeo?"

convinced that, by "any other name," she should like him quite as well.

Mrs. Clinton said no word when the recital ended; but after sitting in deep thought while Ella completed her toilet, she started suddenly, exclaiming—"You have driven all things from my mind. I have some news for you. Mr. Huntington has at last actually arrived. He asked for you at once. His curiosity is nearly equal to your own. Come, shall we go down?"

One month before, and Ella's heart would have throbbed at this announcement; but so perverse is human nature, that she now listened to it with positive pain; and though she could not refuse her sister, her step had lost the lightness that had before distinguished it.

"I will come as soon as I have had some coffee," she whispered, as they reached the dining-room door; and then she turned to Mrs. Clinton's parlour in search of Frank to accompany her. Oh, joy! her lover was there leaning against the window, and seemingly absorbed in some deeply interesting reverie. Ella sprang forward with a glad cry, and, ere she was aware that she had done so, stood folded to his heart. As he smoothed back the soft curls from her brow, he saw that her cheek was flushed, and felt how rapidly that little heart was beating. Was it not natural to ask the cause of this unusual excitement? Ella told him her dread of meeting Mr. Huntington; how she had escaped almost from his presence; and then she hid her face on his shoulder, and fairly cried from nervous vexation; for—would you believe it?—Walter but smiled instead of attempting to console her; and he even said, "Is this Mr. Huntington so very disagreeable to you?"

"I hope I shall never see him. I am resolved I never will. I shall hate his very name, presently, if *you* take his part."

Walter seemed to be of Frank's opinion with regard to Ella in a pout. He half stooped to kiss her red lips ere he spoke again.

"Ella," said he, at last, as though he had quite forgotten Mr. Huntington, "is my name unpleasant to you? Tell me truly."

Ella hesitated; but she could not tell an untruth; so she said, softly, "*Walter* is very beautiful."

"No, Ella; your shrinking from pronouncing my unfortunate name, tells me all I wished to know. Tell me one thing more. Would it please you to find that it had been assumed, after all—that my own was quite different? How would you like it to be Huntington, for instance?"

Ella glanced upwards, half bewildered at his words; and then a suspicion of the truth flashed upon her. She was not deceived. It *was* Mr. Huntington himself who detained her at his side while he asked forgiveness, and explained Frank's little plot. At first, it was to be explained very soon; he had begged Frank to do so again and again, but Mr. Clinton was inexorable until Ella's fancies had been fully thwarted. She understood now why Frank had rushed so hastily to meet his friend the night of his unexpected arrival, and the long colloquies they had so often held.

Ellen was at first heartily vexed, and would have escaped from the room; but Frank Clinton barred all egress, and she was compelled to listen to his teasing, which Mr. Huntington in vain tried to prevent. Then Agnes came, and gave glad congratulations to the tearful girl, who was at last compelled to smile at her own folly, and the success of the plot against her school-girl romance.

One more scene in Ella Kirkland's life, and thou and I, dear reader, part for a season.

Just a year from the commencement of our sketch, that young lady sat reading a letter, a very full letter, crossed and recrossed, which Walter had just brought to her. The *ci-devant* Mr. Brown had improved vastly in that period. The sunburnt flush of prairie travel had faded from his fine face, and his eyes were radiant with the light of happiness as he stood gazing on the graceful creature so soon to be his wife. But at last he grew impatient of the long epistle which seemed to interest Ellen so deeply, and he insisted on sharing its contents with her. As Ella made no strong objections to his so doing, we may conclude that we also have the right of perusal, particularly as it is from an old acquaintance, Clara Howard.

"Willingly would I comply with your request, dear Ella, but I was just on the point of claiming your promise for myself. My own bridal is fixed for the next month. I, too, have found one who loves me devotedly. 'Is he wealthy?' will be your first question, if you remember our last conversation.

"'Yes,' I can answer unhesitatingly. Not as the world receives the term; not in houses or lands; but, Ella, the wealth my Arthur offers for the acceptance of his bride, is far more imperishable than these—a noble affectionate heart; a cultivated intellect; a firm purpose of right. He has taught me (not in words, for I should be pained to have him know my once boasted craving for riches), that our happiness in this life depends upon ourselves rather than our surroundings; upon intellectual culture, and a heart at peace with the world and our MAKER. In fine, that *content* is the only true treasure of the soul; turning, Midas-like, all that its radiance rests upon, to gold. This is our chief

portion ; but this we, in truth, possess. The future is fair before us, for Arthur's talents will raise him to the station he might boldly claim among earth's noblest sons. For the present, we may need to struggle with many difficulties ; but our purposes are fairly wedded, and we shall aid each other.

" May God bless you, my friend, as a wife ; and may you both be as happy as *we* are hoping to be."

THE TREASURE SHIP.

A seal having as a device a ship under full sail. Motto—" *I bear the hopes of Many.*"

KNOW ye, oh, solemn waves that round it swell,
The precious burden which ye onward bear ?
Soft winds, fair winds, ye do your bidding well,
Winged as ye come by earnest mournful prayer ;
" God speed the ship"—it is a wailing cry,
Wrung out from many a heart's deep agony.

How long the night to all who hope with dawn
To see those sails rise o'er the horizon's verge ;
The midnight bell which marks the day now gone,
Seems unto some to strike a boding dirge ;
The faint of heart are they who tread life's sea
As the disciple trod the waves of Galilee.

For those who woo no sorrow ere it falls,
The pulse of hope is thrilling wildly now :
The maiden with a blushing cheek recalls
The earnest words that seal a parting vow
From one whose wanderings o'er the trackless main
Are leading him towards home and love again.

A mother yearns for tidings of her child,—
The wife sleeps but to dream of one afar,
(Oh, sleep, thy many visions fleet and wild
How fearful in their life-like truth they are !)
So wears the night, and still that tolling bell
Rings bridal chimes for some, for some a knell.

Oh, silent, guiding stars ! Oh, sounding waves !
Oh, rushing blast ! have ye no answering thrill ?
Can ye not feel an impulse wild, that craves
A boon for those who wait upon your will ?
Urge on the treasure ship—with fearful freight
She comes to them a messenger of fate.

TRANSPLANTED FLOWERS.

"This it is to feel uncared for,
Like a useless wayside stone,
This it is to walk in spirit
Through the desolate world—alone!"

T. BUCHANAN READ.



NNIE, you will write to me very soon?—promise me now."

"Yes, darling, very soon."

"I know not why it is, but I have felt all day as if we never were to meet again, or, if we did, that I should be most unhappy to find that you had changed, and loved your little country friend no longer."

"Nonsense, Sophie! I shall see you next examination day, you know, and what will change true hearts in one year?"

I kissed away the tears that came to dim those loving eyes, and pressed the bright young head of my gentle friend more closely to my heart. Yet I could not check her sadness; and the influence of the dark mood fell upon my spirit. We were standing in a vine-wreathed portico that led from the little music-room in which so many happy hours had been passed. Our teacher was touching gently the keys of an open piano, and her low-toned, earnest voice floated to us as it breathed—

"Love not, love not, the thing thou lov'st may die!"

"There is more fear of death than change, Sophie," said I, as we listened silently.

"I do not dread *death*, Annie: I could bear that, I think, calmly as a martyr," she answered, smiling a little at the trite comparison; "but I have always felt so unworthy of love as to tremble when any one seemed to regard me with affection, lest it should be transient. I had never dared to love any one but my mother and father and dear Philip, till I met you. Oh! *change would be death to me!*"

I felt the shudder that ran through her delicate frame as she spoke, and involuntarily wound my arm more closely about her. I knew that she had thought rightly.

"Mr. Edgar, as I live!" exclaimed lively Nell Stetson from the window just above us. "Take care, girls—Sophie, your curls are horribly tangled, and I know he is coming to see you."

I did not mark the blush that came to Sophie's face, for just then a carriage stopped at the little gate near which we stood, and I heard my brother's voice ask if I was ready.

"Good-bye! God bless you, Annie! I cannot see you before the rest. Do not forget me"—and in a moment I had pressed a fervent kiss upon the pure brow of the speaker, and Sophie Ellis bounded through the open door. This was our parting.

The kind faces of my teachers seemed sad as they came out upon the portico to bid me farewell; the school-girls, one after another, told me that they should miss me from their midst; yet somehow, dearly as I loved them all, I could hear but one tone as my brother lifted me gently into the carriage—could see but one face as I leaned my head upon his breast and sobbed like a child at leaving the home of the past few years. There was a sudden turn in the road, and I caught the last glimpse of the dear

old house; there was a sad, sweet face looking eagerly from the music-room, and as I waved my hand a kiss was wafted to me—when all was hidden.

"Come, tell me about this friend you seem to love so much," said my brother, wishing to make me forget my sorrow; and as we drove silently through the dim forest, or wound by the river's side, he listened to her simple story. It was very simple—the history of a quiet country maiden, with a refined mind, a loving heart, and exquisite child-like beauty of face and feature. We had been class-mates for three years, though she was by more than a twelvemonth my junior. She was ambitious, strange as it may seem, and it was a worthy ambition. Her home—how often she had described it to me!—numbered but three in their household bonds when she, the bird of that sheltering nest, was away. Her father, serene and noble, in the evening of life; her mother, younger by ten years, a busy and notable housekeeper; and their son, older than Sophie, a fine specimen of the New England farmer. Sophie, the pet, the darling, was, by the advice of their good friend the clergyman of their little village, to become a teacher. He saw that, child as she was, there were talents undeveloped which would make her a noble woman; and he thought these should not be hidden. Yet it needed much persuasion ere the parents could be made to view the subject as he did. At length his object was gained and Sophie was sent to school—not to be made a fine lady, but a noble woman, who was to assume the responsible station of a teacher of younger minds and hearts when her own should have received sufficient culture.

I was hundreds of miles from my own loved home—a stranger among strangers—when I first knew Sophie Ellis; and we loved each other as sisters for many terms of school-girl life. First to

leave the shelter we had found, I have told you how I parted with her; and *surprise* is too tame a word to express the emotions with which I read her first letter when scarce two months had elapsed.

"I do not know how to tell you—but I am not going to be a teacher after all; I am —— to be — married in the spring, Annie."

No wonder aunt Mary looked up in astonishment as I dropped the letter from my hands with a cry almost like fright.

"Sophie Ellis, aunt!" said I—"Sophie is going to be married, and she is full a year younger than I."

Aunt smiled: "And you are almost seventeen. I was a wife at your age."

"And did you never regret going from home so early?"

"I have wondered at my daring to assume then the many duties of a married life, though I can truly say regret has never mingled with that wonder. Few find such love as has been my portion, and from what you have told me of your friend, I fear she is but seeking sorrow. We will not prophesy evil," she added, seeing the disconcerted glances with which I listened

Mr. Edgar, of whom Nell Stetson had spoken so lightly, was the chosen one. Little did I think how true were her words when she playfully bade Sophie smooth her curls at his approach. We had known him then scarce a month, though his sister had been our classmate for a year or more. I did not like her—why, I could scarcely tell, unless it was for the haughty manner she sometimes assumed. Though very beautiful, wealthy, and clever, she was not half as well beloved as our darling Sophie, who, as the old song runs, had but her face as her fortune. I

have seen Laura Edgar's fine eye flash and her red lips curl as she said, "I should not be an Edgar if I were not proud!" then with her tall, queenly form, one might have thought her "born for a coronet;" and indeed we had always called her "the countess" in our little gatherings. Her brother was like her in person, and I found also in heart, though he was not yet old enough to curb pleasure that he might indulge his pride. Beauty he worshipped; and when he came to pay his sister a visit in our secluded valley, he lingered away the summer month usually passed at Newport or Saratoga, charmed, as he averred, by the mountain scenery, but as it now proved by the softer loveliness of our favourite. I did not wish to join in what my aunt had said, but as I thought over all this, and recalled his proverbially unstable character—his youth, for he had scarcely attained his majority, I could not but acknowledge there was a cloud hidden in the present brightness of the horizon.

Then too, Sophie, though graceful and winning, knew nothing of the great world in which she now must mingle. Nothing of its forms, its restraints, and the cold, proud nature of the circle to which she would be introduced, where every word is measured ere spoken, each thought veiled for the sake of courtesy until it almost becomes deceit.

Poor Sophie!

Nearly three years had passed, and I too was a bride. Happy? Yes! "blessed beyond the limit of my wildest dreams!" and on my way to a new residence, I passed a few bright days in the great metropolis which was the home of Sophie Edgar, now long a wife. We had not met during that time, and of late our cor-

respondence had been neglected, as both entered a round of new duties and pleasures.

The last strains of a beautiful overture were dying away through the vast dome of the crowded theatre, as I leaned forward eagerly, for a party entered a box near the one in which we were seated, and a familiar face was the brightest of that group. It was indeed familiar, though changed—so changed! No longer the timid, shrinking maiden, but a brilliant woman. Sophie was before me. There were gems flashing from her beautiful arms, and wreathed in the richly braided hair. The dress of dark velvet heightened by contrast a pure, glowing complexion; and her eyes—ay, there was the change! they were strangely lighted with a fearful brilliancy; and her full, red lips were wreathed scornfully, as she listened to the idle compliments of the tribe by which she was surrounded. At first I could scarce withdraw my gaze from her; but as the play went on, and increased in interest, then my friend was forgotten. It was the “Hunchback;” and as I traced the transformation of its heroine from a warm-hearted country maiden, to the cold, haughty woman of fashion, I glaneed involuntarily to the group near me—there was so much of truth in the portrait. I was recognized; a brilliant colour flitted to her cheek; a start, a smothered exclamation; then that strange creature forced her eyes upon the stage, as if quite regardless of my presence.

“I called *yott*—*Clifford*; and you called *me*—*madam!*”

The words fell mournfully upon my ear, as the humbled and penitent Julia feels the bitterness of her own rash act. And Sophie—I might have been deceived, but at least I fancied that a look of agony passed over her face—yes, I must have been

deceived, for as the curtain fell, her tone came gaily to my ear, as she addressed words of playful *bardinage* to her companion.

As we pressed through the crowded lobby, I felt my hand grasped quickly; and turning, Sophie was beside me.

"Tell me where I can find you, Annie," said she, hurriedly, without one word of greeting.

I had scarce time to reply, ere the crowd swept forward, and we were again separated.

A strange, sad mood came over me, as I sat the next morning looking out upon the crowds that thronged Broadway; a lone foreboding of evil, such as I have often felt, and never that it has not proved a prophecy. Something whispered, "when next you look upon this busy scene, joy will have ended in mourning." I was fast yielding to tears, under the influence of that desolate emotion, when Sophie was announced. Nay, but for the sweet mouth, the liquid eyes, I never should have recognized my old schoolmate. The brilliant belle of the evening threw herself on the sofa beside me, and burying her face in her folded arms, burst into a passion of tears. As of old—for I had often soothed the young girl's sorrow—I drew her to my heart, but I could offer no word of comfort,—could only weep with her

Suddenly she threw aside my circling arm, and, starting to her feet, the rich mantle which enveloped her fell aside, revealing a figure so slight, that I started with wonder that aught earthly could be so fragile.

Her face, too, was wan and colourless in the morning light, save the deep flush of the hollow cheek; that, and the unearthly light of her full, gleaming eyes, betrayed a mournful secret.

"Look at me, Annie," she said; "look at your old friend; three years have wrought a wondrous change, have they not? Do

you remember our parting—the still, calm twilight—the melody from all around that went up on the evening air? And I, so pure—I *was* pure, Annie—so free from care; *now* I daily thank God that I am dying; *dying*,” she murmured again, very bitterly.

“ Sophie, do not speak so; you are too young, too good; what has pained and excited you this morning? come, tell me all, as in our old school-days; it will calm you.”

“ Yes, I will tell you all—all, though it is known but to God and—my husband.” She knelt beside me, and passing my arm about her waist, looked up with a searching, almost imploring gaze. “ Though I have suffered, I have never complained,” she said. “ What I say to you now is but a message; you must tell my poor mother, when I am gone, the fate of her darling. My mother loved me—all did at home, did they not? No one loves me here.”

“ Sophie,” said I, startled at her vehemence, “ do not tell me this; who could help loving you, my bird?”

“ Do not call me that; it was *his* name for me once; and I do not like to hear it from other lips. You remember that I told you *change* would be *death* to me; even so it has proved. But I will be more calm. I met Harold Edgar, as you know. I was young—he so intelligent, so gentlemanly, so winning. He was the first who ever addressed me—the first who told me I was beautiful. He did not say so, but his eyes, his attentions whispered it. So, Annie, I was flattered, interested; then I forgot myself in the delight I felt at his presence. I watched for his coming with a heart thrilling at every footstep; I counted the hours of his absence, for they pressed like years. Then he told me that he loved me, he prayed me to love him; how could I

refuse that request, when my whole being had unconsciously long been bound up in his? ‘Love you!’ I murmured; it seemed to me like a dream, that he, so very beautiful, so manly, so warm-hearted, could love one like myself.

“When we parted that night, I was in heart betrothed to him, though I waited until my father and mother had seen and approved my choice, ere I consented to be his wife. Approved, I said; my mother was flattered by his station, his wealth, his bearing. God is my witness, I thought but of himself, and the priceless treasure of his affection. My father did not seem quite pleased. ‘You are both young,’ he said; ‘my child is ignorant of the world, its forms and influences. Are you sure you will not weary of her simplicity, or blush for her little knowledge of the society in which you mingle?’

“Harold looked as if he thought my father was beside himself. ‘Ashamed of Sophie!’ he answered, warmly. ‘She has more natural grace than they all; she might be their teacher.’

“My father smiled at his enthusiasm, and I blushed deeply at his praise. At last father ceased to oppose Harold and my mother, but Philip was not so easily satisfied.

“‘It’s all well enough now,’ he would say, ‘but wait until the novelty has worn off a little — till he gets back to his horses and his high company. I don’t mean to say he doesn’t love you, pet, for anybody that you loved couldn’t help it. But it’s not my sort of love. You’d better stay with us, than go among those city people, with their fine houses and cold hearts. You know old friends, but new ones you cannot trust.’

“So you see I was warned fully, but I would not listen. How could I dream of change? for he seemed so devoted to me, so miserable when away, so happy at my side. I grew selfish in my

affection for him—it absorbed all other love, all other friendship. His image came between me and my God. We were married. I need not tell you, who are now so blessed, the happiness of the long, long summer ramble that we made, lingering, as fancy prompted, among the beautiful valleys and by the silver lakes of dear New England. Autumn came, and I passed a week at my own home ere going to my husband's. How I smiled at Philip's fears! Harold, too, jested at his wise advice; but the time was not yet come. I had received a costly gift from Mrs. Edgar, another from Harold's sister, just after my marriage; they came with a letter of congratulation, which seemed cold and formal; but I knew Laura Edgar, and you, too, Annie, remember how haughty she was: so I was not surprised, and listened in blind confidence to my husband's assurances that all his friends would be mine.

"You know my natural timidity and shrinking from strange associations. I came here expecting to be met as a sister and child. I was welcomed with frigid politeness, and the love which had been rising in my heart was utterly crushed. For a time I was wilfully blind to the truth which would rise before me. I knew at length that I was considered as an intruder not only in my husband's family, but also in the haughty and aristocratic circle they drew around them. They were ever courteous to me—coldly, rigidly so; but my heart was chilled, my life daily embittered by the knowledge that Harold's marriage was freely spoken of as a *mesalliance*. And Harold, how could he but know this? I cannot blame him that he became less fond—that he was drawn away from one whom others regarded coldly. He had been accustomed to consider the opinion of that clique as law from his earliest youth. Though at first he clung to me

perhaps more closely, for the reason that others avoided me, he was young, you know, Annie, and easily swayed by strong influences. It was perhaps my fault, in a great measure, that he was so often away from me; for I childishly refused to mingle with those who I knew but suffered my society, and withdrew from all to cherish an upspringing regret at my hasty rejection of childhood's love and sympathy.

" My husband's coldness toward me did not arise at once; he struggled against it, I am sure. But how could he devote himself to my solitary hours? how could he but be vexed that I would not go into the world—his world? At first I did not reproach him—I have never reproached him in words—by being sad in his presence. I tried to interest him more than ever, but when I knew that my society grew irksome, I ceased to caress or seek for caresses; though oftentimes, when he has coldly bid me farewell—for days, sometimes weeks he was absent—I could have knelt at his feet with the wild idolatry which sprang to my lips, praying him to love me as of old. I would have been his *slave*, had he thought me unworthy to be his wife—his humble slave, so that I might live in his presence, and sometimes see the sunlight of his smile. This is but the truth—the happiness of days sprang from a kiss once given with a gleam of his former affection—a smile of the old love would make me weep like a child, and in my solitude, recalling that glance, my whole frame has trembled with thrilling joy.

At home they have never known that he was ever less devoted than at first. I have seen them but once since that first happy visit, and then we were both actors, for I prayed him to spare me that trial—to let them be deceived with the thought their evil

forebodings were folly; but alas, I felt too keenly, each moment, that they were fully realized.

At length I made a desperate resolve that I would become a leader in the circle that had despised me. I knew that I had talent; grace and ease I could acquire; I had grown more beautiful in my seclusion. I do not say this vainly; I debated all calmly, and weighed it but as a means of my woman's revenge. It is just a year since I threw aside the timidity and coldness of my manner. I mingled in society—shaped my deeds, my words to their hollow forms. None wondered more than Harold at the change; and at first, when he saw me flattered and sought for—for I succeeded in that—I was playing for a desperate stake, my husband's love, and it gave me strength—he seemed disposed to join in the homage so freely offered. Then—shall I whisper it even to you?—he grew jealous of the butterflies that hovered constantly about me; he did not know that I would gladly have turned from all to have rested in *his* confidence and love; that one word of praise from *his* lips was far dearer than all offered homage. He thought my nature perverted—my heart changed. And I was proud—proud in my misery. I scorned to explain—I felt that he should have known my motives better—that I sought the stamp of their approval only that he deemed it necessary.

You saw last night what my life has become—so day after day passes; cold formality at home—home!—and triumphs which I despise when abroad. But I am wearing out, Annie, fast, fast. Put your hand upon my heart—closer—there—can you count its throbbings? It is often thus; and again all pulsation will seem to cease. It will be silent enough soon."

"Sophie! Sophie! do not speak so bitterly!" I sobbed:

"You deceive yourself—you have done wrong. There are many bright days for you, darling. Your husband cannot be heartless — you will win him yet."

"Heartless! did you dare to say my husband was heartless? No, no! he should have wedded one in his own sphere; the dove, you remember, in the old Latin fable, could not soar to the eagle's nest, even though supported by his stronger pinion. The fluttering wings broke the feeble heart. How happy we were, sitting in the dim wood and reading line by line that simple tale! Little did I dream it would be my fate."

She had sunk quite at my feet ere her story ended, and the velvet folds of her mantle formed the cushion on which she rested. Poor crushed flower crouching there in very hopelessness! her thin hands tightly clasped, till the jewels, which mocked their paleness, seemed almost buried in the slender fingers. Her curls were dishevelled, yet soft and light, and they lay about her face caressingly, as the poor heart's rapid pulse had sent a crimson glow to the lips and to the cheeks. Never had I seen her more beautiful—so wildly brilliant were those large, full eyes — so graceful that fragile form.

There was a well-known step upon the stairs; I started, and Sophie rose, hastily gathering the rich drapery around her. "Come to me very soon — before you leave — to-morrow I shall be at liberty"—and she glided from the room. I saw her enter the costly equipage that had waited so long for its mistress; the liveried servant bowed low, the noble steeds sprang forward, and in a moment had borne her from my sight.

Two days had passed; a violent storm of driving rain and sleet prevented my fulfilling out-door engagements; and as the

clouds parted on the morning of the third, my first impulse was to return Sophie's call.

"The carriage is waiting, madam," said the servant, as he handed me a note. It was without an envelope; the address, in a hand I had never seen before, was traced so hurriedly as to be scarcely legible. The date was two days previous—and at length I deciphered the nervous and blotted scrawl.

"Come to me, Annie, if you can. I am not well to-day; perhaps the time I have longed for has arrived. My heart throbs so wildly that I can scarce guide the pen, and my hand is so weak that"—

Underneath was a single line, still more illegible, in the same hand as the address.

"You were once my poor Sophie's friend—come to her now. God knows she needs friends! I, who have killed her, say it EDGAR."

"What can this mean? Why was the note not delivered yesterday? Order the carriage directly," I almost gasped. Forgetful of time or place, I saw nothing of the crowd as we dashed through Broadway; the din of labour and pleasure arose around me unheeded; the cessation of the rapid speed alone aroused me as we reached Waverley Place. I could scarce believe it, yet it was even so; the closed shutters, the funeral crape fluttering and eddying in the bleak wind from the door of the lordly mansion upon whose threshold I stood, revealed, without a word, the terrible truth. I was ushered into the dark and silent rooms, whose costly furniture and glowing carpets seemed but a mockery. The veiled mirrors gave back no reflection—the cautious tread of the servants, no echo. Oh! the terror, the chilling apathy which came over my heart as I sat there listening

to its beating! It was fearfully distinct in that house of death.

"This way, if you please, madam;" and I followed the young girl who roused me from that mood. Never shall I forget the scene which greeted me as I entered an apartment decorated with no less care and taste than those I had just left. The winter sun stole struggling through the half-closed blinds, and lingering in the crimson curtains, sent a faint, rosy flush through the room. The gilded cornices, the velvet couches, a snowy statue gleaming in the twilight of a distant recess — and there, in the centre of all that luxury, lay the being for whom it had been gathered — pale, lifeless — the seal of death upon the sweet mouth, the smile of an eternal rest upon the calm, pure forehead. There was no pain, no suffering there, darling Sophie! no discord to torture the loving heart — those eyes were never more to be blinded by tears! But one knelt by that silent couch, whose anguish gave wild contrast to its dreamless repose. Alas for thee, proud man, that the flower perished on thy bosom! its life and beauty were yielded to thee as a guardian, not as a destroyer! Hide it as thou wilt, seek to banish it as thou mayst, there is a secret remorse that will cling to thee through life; that hour, that room, beheld its first agony.

Hours — yes, I am sure *hours* passed, before a word was spoken. I could but kneel beside the couch, and yield to an agony of tears, as I recalled the brief existence of my poor friend. The pet of a household where she had been nurtured in love, dying far from home — perhaps alone in the dark hour. Not alone, as I learned when at length my hand was grasped by Harold Edgar, and he poured out to me, as the friend of his poor wife, the bitterness of his heart. He told me how he had

wooed her from her quiet home; that intoxicated with her beauty, and delighted with the simple earnestness of her nature—so different from the formal circles by which he had ever been surrounded—he did not pause to think that affluence might prove a blighting atmosphere to one so differently nurtured. He had rejected the counsel of her parents—the sneers and remonstrances of his own made him but the more determined; so he called her his own, and for a time there came no shadow to their young hearts.

I will not again recall the sorrowful story of their estrangement. Sophie had told me the truth; but with woman's shielding devotion, she had touched too lightly on her own wrongs. How was that proud spirit humbled as he recounted the effect of his own misdeeds—of his neglect—and, worse than all, the blinding jealousy which had goaded him to add insulting reproaches, and even taunts, to the sum of misery her gentle nature had already endured.

"I did not deserve her love—I had no right to the holy forgiveness which her last word, her last look, breathed. She told me all, when my repentance was too late; when my poor victim"—and he struck his forehead wildly—"was beyond the reach of reparation. God will not forgive me as she did—I can never pardon my own cruelty."

Thus raved the once cold, proud Harold Edgar; and thus I gathered, through his self-reproach, and through his agony, that Sophie had died upon his breast, with her arm clasped tenderly about him. Oh, the endurance, the long-suffering of woman's holy affection—forbearance in life, forgiveness of wrong in the death hour.

The shadows of evening rested on the calm forehead of the

sleeper, when I pressed my lips for the last time upon the sweet mouth which was now so coldly rigid. That bright head that had so often rested near my heart, was soon to be hidden for ever from the light of day; the thin hands, clasped upon the icy breast, w^ould never more be loosened; the marriage-ring glittered through that clasping, at once the author and symbol of her misery. So I left them—the young bride of Death, and the heart-stricken watcher—

“To the lonely marriage pillow, and the tears which he must weep.”

As I trod silently through the desolate splendour which surrounded me, marked the tokens of wealth and taste glittering upon every side, and then returned in thought to the scene I had just beheld, verily, I thought—

“ ‘Tis better to be lowly born,
And range with humble livers in content,
Than to be perk’d up with a glittering grief,
And wear a golden sorrow.”

TOO LATE!

"I have outlived all love."—*Bulwer's Richelieu.*

OH! weary thought! Oh! heart cast down and lone!
Oh! hopeless spirit!—burdened with a grief
That giveth utterance to the mournful tone
Of this low murmur—words so full—so brief—
"Outlived all love."

Did God deny thee gifts by which to win
Affection from the crowd that 'round thee throng?
Or didst thou lose, by folly or by sin,
The hope that else had made thy soul most strong,
Of gaining love?

When first thy mother clasped thee in her arms,
And bade thy father watch thine infant glee—
Why did her soul thrill with such wild alarms,
And bounding hopes? Was it not all for thee?
Did not she love?

Childhood mourns not for friends. It passed away—
Then *on thyself* depended future joy.
Retraeet thy footsteps, did those friends betray
The trust bestowed by thee—a fair-browed boy—
Living in love?

Nay—one by one they turned—thy heart was proud,
 Thy mood suspicious, and they could not brook
 The coldness, and reserve, that as a cloud
 Veiled all thy movements, chilling every look
 That asked for love.

Thy manhood pride was glorious—it is past;
 Ambition's thirst is slaked;—a dreary void
 Taketh the placee of schemes that once so fast
 Hurried thee onward; life and thought employed,
 Shutting out love.

Too late—too late! Thou canst not win them back—
 The friends of youth; the love of riper years.
 Alone, pass onward in the narrow track
 Which thou hast chosen—learn with bitter tears,
That man needs love.

'T is God's best gift—be wise, and scorn it not,
 Thou who art strong in pride of hope and life.
 The brightest gleam that gilds our darkened lot,
 Lighting us onward through its fearful strife—
 Oh! priceless love!

And if thy soul is steeled against mankind,
 Pause—ere thy heart grows cold and desolate.
 Cheer those who droop—the wounded spirit bind—
 Win hearts, and it shall never be thy fate
 To outlive love.

THE

YOUNG BRIDE'S TRIALS.

CHAPTER I.

"Deal gently thou, whoso hand hast won
The young bird from its nest away,
Where careless, 'neath a vernal sun,
She gayly carolled day by day.
Deal gently with her; thou art dear,
Beyond what vestal lips have told,
And like a lamb from fountains clear,
She turns confiding to thy fold."

MRS. SIGOURNEY.



"NDEED, Laura, you must come and dine with us; I shall take no denial. We shall be quite alone, in our own room, and you need see no one. Urge her, Louis."

"We should be most happy to see you, Mrs. Lawton. I have heard Marian speak of you so often, that I feel as if we were quite old friends; and I was just regretting that our short stay would not allow us to meet you again."

"I never could resist Marian's pleading," said Mrs. Lawton, pressing the little hand she held. "Yes, I will come; for I cannot tell when we may meet again."

Marian flew down the steps like a child, and, as her tall, grave

companion landed her into the carriage, he said, "To the Irving House;" and they were gone.

It was scarce an hour after, that Mrs. Lawton was ushered into a private parlour of the crowded hotel, and found Marian there alone waiting to receive her.

"Oh! I am so glad you are come, Laura, darling! I wanted to see you again. I have a thousand things to say; things I could not say before Louis. First of all, let me tell you how good and kind he is. Oh! nobody knows but his little wife how noble, how generous, how charming!"

Mrs. Lawton smiled as she laid her bonnet on the pier-table; but it was a sad smile; for she caught sight of the dark dress she was even yet unaccustomed to.

"I have no doubt, Marie, that you think so, and that others think so, too; but how long have you known him? I had scarce heard of your engagement when your marriage was announced."

"Oh, that was to please Louis. He was ill at uncle's last—let me see—last September; and I was there. Oh! he was so patient after he left his room, and I"—

"Yes; and you nursed the convalescent?"

"No; I amused him, and sang to him, and read, and brought him flowers. I pitied him, you know."

"Sympathetic little soul!"

"You need not smile, Laura; I did not dream that he loved me—I am sure I did not—and then it was all passed before I knew it. Mamma consented; and uncle said it was such an excellent match—he always thinks of such things, you know—and Louis said he must not be away from home in the winter, and he could not leave me among the mountains; and though I

pouted, mamma and he arranged it all, and we were married thirteen days ago. No; I declare, I have been Mrs. Musgrave—(don't it sound odd!)—two whole weeks to-day."

"And this is the ninth of December. Well, they gave you very little time. You have not repented it yet?"

Mrs. Lawton spoke half-jestingly; yet there was a tone of seriousness in the apparent *bardinage*.

"Repented!—O no; and never shall. Why Louis is perfection! He indulges me in everything; he calls me the sweetest pet names; and see how generous he is. There"—and the young bride turned the key of a richly inlaid dressing-case, and drew forth a heavy diamond bracelet, that sparkled and flashed as the sunlight fell upon its snowy velvet cushion. "Is not that magnificent?—and I have a whole set—ring, brooch—everything! It was his bridal gift."

Mrs. Lawton's lips quivered, and a tear fell upon the gems that glittered in her hand. It was not envy; ah no, at least not envy of the costly gifts, which were lavished upon the young creature at her side. But all this while memory had been busy in recalling the scenes of her own bridal, and how she too had looked forward to many, many years of uninterrupted happiness. The second anniversary had not come, when she assumed the sad garb of the widow. It was no wonder that she was sad when she saw anticipations so brilliant, and a heart so full of buoyant hope as her own had been, going forth to meet the harsh experiences of life, and thought how coldly that might fall, and that the sorrow would be heightened by its unannounced approach.

But she could not bear to check the joyous spirit at her side with the dull croakings of experience, and so she smiled again

that same sweet, sad smile to hear the little wife set forth her husband's praises.

"We are going to Washington now, Laura. Do you remember how often we used to talk about it at school?—but I never expected then to be the wife of such a distinguished man. Is n't he young to have been in Congress?—though he's older than he looks—thirty-five next spring—would you guess it?"

"And you are just seventeen, Marian."

"Yes; but he's so young in heart, you know, and he never seems old. Now tell me, am I not a most fortunate child?"

"You deserve all your good fortune, Marie. But tell me about his family. Have you seen any of them?"

"Only his cousin Harry, who was one of our attendants. His sisters could not go so far in the winter; they are older than Louis, and live with him. Won't it be nice? I shall have no bother of housekeeping. We go back to Maple Grove in February, and then I shall see them all. Louis says they will be sure to love me."

Mrs. Lawton wondered if any one could help it, as she looked into those loving eyes, turned with eager questioning to her own; and yet—she could not account for it—this mention of Mr. Musgrave's sisters, and their tardiness in claiming their new relative, had somehow made her uncomfortable.

That Marian was loved, and with no ordinary affection, by her grave and stately husband, there could be no doubt. The smile with which he greeted her on his entrance soon after, the glance of undisguised admiration which followed her fairy-like movements, were plain interpreters of an honest heart.

"And now," said Marian, gayly, as a servant announced

dinner, "see how I shall look at the head of my husband's table. Must I be demure, Louis?"

Mrs. Lawton looked up at the same moment, and fancied that she saw a shade flit across his face at these words. But no, it could not be; for he was doing the honours of the table with the most finished courtesy, not a moment afterwards, and smiling at the lively sallies of Marian, who seemed filled with the very spirit of joyousness. Her trials had made her too suspicious; and the young widow wondered if she could ever have been so gay, so thoughtless as her old school-friend now was.

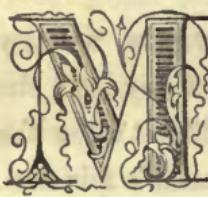
"Heaven bless you, Marian!" she said, fervently, as they parted. "And shield you from the bitterness of my lot," she would have added; but her unselfish nature would not allow the words to pass her lips, lest she should shadow Marian's fair face.

"Thou art just, my FATHER," she murmured, as she walked homeward, so lonely in that crowded street. "Yet why, O why was I thus chastened, while others are permitted to live in the sunshine of affection?" and then as she rebuked this rebellious emotion, she wondered what could arise to sadden the light-heartedness of young Marian; for she had learned thus early, that God does not permit unalloyed happiness to those whom he loves, lest their affection should be devoted to this world and its idols.

CHAPTER II.

"So innocent-arch, so cunning-simple,
From beneath her gathered whimple,
Glancing with black-bearded eyes,
Till the lightning laughers dimple
The baby-roses in her cheeks;
Then away she flies."

TENNYSON.

 MARIAN had spoken the truth, when she said she had "amused" Mr. Musgrave. The peculiar and unconscious witcheries of her voice and manner had stolen into his heart, in the wearisome hours of convalescence; and the quiet, retired student, who had passed unscathed the fire of four winters at Washington, found himself loving—nay, actually engaged to, a little country damsel to whom he was a stranger two months before. If he had at times any misgivings as to the suitableness of this union, they were dispelled by the charming gayety of Marian, who, though she had never mingled in the polished circles of the capital, possessed a natural grace and *ladyhood* that could not have been improved by any rules of art.

That she loved him for himself alone, undazzled by his wealth and position, which might have won many a lady fair, he did not doubt. She hovered around him like a bird; she sat at his feet upon a low cushion, and looked up in the pauses of the poems which she read to him, her eyes filled with tears of tenderness and emotion, as she found her own love interpreted in the words of the poet.

Oh, it was a glad bright dream, that lingering convalescence, and one which the world-wearied man had not thought could chain his heart. So he won her to himself, for he felt that life would be dark if the sunshine of her presence was withdrawn; and Marian went forth trustingly, for what was existence now away from him?

He did not ask himself if he was doing right, in withdrawing her so young, and so affectionate, from the shelter of home, to be the companion of one grown old in enjoyment, and wearied of life's busy scenes. He did not pause to test his love, and see if it was strong enough to guard her, even from her self-delusions, when she should be ushered into the world, that wore so smiling a face to welcome her—to bear with her childish follies when their freshness and novelty no longer amused him. He believed that a strong and yet hidden inner life was to make her the companion of his nobler thoughts; but he forgot that patient and skilful guidance was necessary to give this Undine a soul.

She became a star at Washington; her youth, beauty, and position were acknowledged. How proud he was of her, as he watched her graceful form float through the dance, while he stood by in serious conversation with his old political friends, and heard half-whispered praises of his child-wife. For Marian there was a constant round of excitement. Gayety abroad, and unwearyed affection when alone with Louis. She was rejoiced in her beauty now for the first time; but it was because *his* wife possessed it.

There was but one jarring thrill to the harmony of Mr. Musgrave's enjoyment. He had overheard a careless gossip upon their respective ages, and for the first time remembered that he was no longer in early manhood. He wondered if Marian had

ever thought of this, and he glanced into the future and saw that she would be in the prime of life, while he descended in the vale of years. But he did not dwell on this; it did not recur to him again.

"Dear, delightful Washington, how I shall wish for you, and to fly back again!" said Marian, as they drew near Maple Grove, when that festive month had passed.

"But you are going to my home now, dear child; will you not try to be happy there?"

"Oh yes, I know I shall be very, very happy. Tell me all about your sisters now—I shall see them so soon."

Mr. Musgrave wrapped the fur-lined mantle still closer about her, and began, for the thirtieth time, to describe Maple Grove and its inhabitants.

It was the twilight of a dreary winter's day when they entered the grounds, and drove rapidly towards the homestead of which she had heard so much. Marian looked out from the carriage window eagerly; but there was little to be seen except leafless trees and delicate shrubs carefully covered from the cold. The sky was dark and leaden, and whether it was that or the chilly atmosphere, Marian's gayety was very much subdued by the time she was lifted out, as if she had been indeed a child, upon the broad piazza that stretched across the front of the mansion. She was weary, in truth, and fearful for the first time of meeting her new sisters. Louis was never weary of dwelling on Miss Musgrave's benevolence and Miss Margaret's sterling good sense; but they were so much older and wiser, and, above all, so stately, that when they came into the hall to welcome her, she shrank with instinctive timidity from the formal kisses by which she was saluted.

Nor was this lessened when, after their wrappers had been removed, they sat in a stiff circle around the blazing fire, and Miss Margaret inquired the roads, and Miss Musgrave predicted snow before morning. How Marian longed to take the cushions from the old-fashioned *fauteuil* in the corner, and seat herself on the floor at her husband's feet, as she so often had done! She would as soon have thought of throwing her arms about Miss Musgrave's neck, or doing any other equal act of insanity, as to claim her "old accustomed place" now. Yet she could not exactly tell what restrained her; perhaps it was the change which seemed to pass over Louis himself in that chilling atmosphere; let the cause be what it might, the poor little lady sat there bolt upright, and growing more weary, and silent, and stupid, every moment. Home-sickness—it was the first real pang she had found leisure to feel since her marriage—was added to her unhappiness. This was her home now, it is true, but how unlike the cosy little parlour at the cottage; and her mother's gentle smile would come side by side, and in sad contrast to Miss Margaret's immovable face, as often as she looked up. Where, too, was the patter of little feet, the sweet murmur of children's voices? She wondered what Willie, and Etta, and Harry were doing now!

Supper was announced. Oh, what a relief it was! and she forgot the awful presence of her new sisters for a moment, and sprang, as she was wont, to the side of Louis. But she was recalled to the present by the look, almost of reproof, which she met; and, sad and blushing, she walked demurely to the dining-room. Here, too, she was reminded that this was not *her* home. The cheerful chit-chat of their own tea-table was exchanged for dull monosyllables; for Miss Musgrave never conversed familiarly

in the presence of servants; and a waiter, who had grown old in the family service, stood as stiff and upright as the ladies themselves, behind his master's chair.

Marian was placed near Louis, and Miss Musgrave took the head of the table. Her brother saw the reserve that was creeping over the party, and tried to throw it off by cheerful conversation. But he met with no response; for Miss Margaret was naturally taciturn, and Marian was too sad to respond. Besides, she did not feel at ease with Miss Musgrave's constant anxiety lest she should not be well served.

She begged to be shown to her room at once, as they rose from the table, and Miss Margaret led the way. Everything there had been arranged by that lady herself, with an eye more to utility than taste. But there was an evident desire to make her comfortable, and Marian could have thrown her arms about Miss Margaret and kissed her good-night as she withdrew, in the fullness of her lonely, grateful little heart. But one glance at the scrupulously smooth collar and unvarying face subdued the rash impulse.

To tell the truth, both ladies were colder and more reserved than usual, or than they had intended to be. They had, in the first place, considered themselves very much aggrieved when their brother announced his intention of marrying. He had devoted himself to them so long, and they had reigned supreme in his house so many years, that it seemed positively unkind in him to bring home a new mistress to Maple Grove. Moreover, it was a fresh offence that he should marry one so young and girlish as they found his bride to be. It was impossible for them to yield up authority to such a mere child. In justice to these excellent women, we must say that they were not conscious of

these emotions, or how far they had influenced their reception of the young stranger. Miss Margaret thought—"Well, this is a pretty little creature," as she returned to the parlour, where her brother and Miss Musgrave were seated in an animated discussion.

"She is not herself to-night at all, sister," said he, as if they had been speaking of Marian; "and since you make such a point of it, you had better retain your usual seat at the table. I do not think Mrs. Musgrave would have the least objection;" and then they began talking about the estate, and other changes in the neighbourhood, during his absence.

Poor little Marian, meanwhile, had dismissed her attendant, and throwing herself upon the hearth-rug, like a child, as she was, looked around the room. It was like the rest of the house—large, and heavily furnished with high antique wardrobes, and dark mahogany chairs it would have tested her strength to move. The fire had burned low, and shed a flickering, unsteady glare over all; and she could hear the wind sighing and moaning with the rising storm, and the leafless branches of the shade-trees strike against the windows. The very bed itself had a gloomy look—it was high, and canopied by crimson curtains, that looked black in the gloom of the apartment, and contrasted disagreeably with the snow-white pillows and counterpanes.

She sat there a long time, thridding her hands through the mass of her unbraided hair, which fell about her.

"Showered in rippled ringlets to her knee,"

and thinking about many things that had never intruded themselves before. At last she rose and moved slowly across the room, almost startled at the rustling her own movements caused,

and laid her head down upon one of those snowy pillows, listening eagerly for her husband's footsteps in the echoing hall. But he came not; and, weary and lonely, she could restrain her tears no longer. Marian had not expected to sob herself to sleep the first night in her new home; but so it was, for the shadows on the wall twined themselves in more fantastic shapes, and the dismal sounds without grew fainter and fainter, till she slept

“Nestling among the pillows soft,
A dove, o'erwearied with its flight.”

CHAPTER III.

“A deep and a mighty shadow
Across my heart is thrown,
Like a cloud on a summer meadow
Where the thunder-wind hath blown!
The wild rose Fancy, dieth—
The sweet bird Memory, fieth,
And leaveth me alone.”

BARRY CORNWALL.



HE room did not look so gloomy in the morning light; and the snow, which had fallen silently for many hours, shrouded the surrounding landscape in a pure drapery, that gave a peculiar beauty to the scene without. Moreover, Louis, removed from the immediate presence of Miss Margaret, was just as she had first known him, and laughed pleasantly when Marian told him of her last night's awe of that good lady. They went down to breakfast in the

best possible temper with each other and the world, and Marian's cheerful gayety seemed to infect the whole household.

"You'll not mind if my sister keeps her old place, will you, little one?" said Louis, as they passed through the hall. "You are hardly dignified enough as yet to take the head of a table; and Caroline would be quite out of her element, if not seated behind the urn."

"Certainly," said Marian, promptly, as she entered the room and saw Miss Musgrave already installed as mistress of the household. It did occur to her that she might have been allowed to decline the post. However, etiquette troubled Marian very little, though she sighed as all her old visions vanished—little home pictures which she had drawn, when Louis was to receive his coffee from her own hands, and chat in the most sociable manner possible over newspapers.

She began to feel more at ease as the morning came on; and when Louis had finished some business which awaited him, they rambled over the house together. His study occupied the western wing, and connected with it was a little room opening with a French window into the garden; and this had been fitted up as the especial retreat of Marian. The furniture of the rest of the house had been unchanged; but this boudoir had many modern elegancies that made it seem a perfect paradise to our little heroine. And here she could sit, and sew or read, and watch Louis at his books through the open door. She should never feel alone—and she sat down directly to write a long letter to her mother, in which she described the stately beauty of her new home, and gave a glowing description of her boudoir, from the delicate curtains to the pretty inlaid desk she was writing upon. She did not say much about Miss Margaret, and mentioned that Miss

Musgrave had kindly relieved her of all trouble in house-keeping.

And this, in truth, she did. Marian soon found that she was never even to be consulted in any home arrangements. The little instance of taking, without a question, the head of the table was a specimen, or key-note, of scenes that were daily enacted. To be sure, the little wife resigned all claims cheerfully; but she did not like being treated quite so much like a child.

There was a fresh source of annoyance for poor Marian. Visitors were daily announced, whose calls of congratulation were in reality calls of curiosity; and she was obliged to be introduced to people that she felt cared nothing for her, and new relations, who criticised her almost before she was out of hearing. We do not mean to say that the people of Moorville, the little town upon which the grounds of Maple Grove bordered, were absolutely ill-natured and rude; but it was natural, when the *eligible* of the neighbourhood had brought home a wife from a distance, that those ladies who considered themselves ill-used by it, and their friends and acquaintances, should try to discover some flaw in the precious piece of porcelain thus elevated to a niche they had in imagination seen destined for themselves.

Always restrained by the presence of one of her sisters, Marian never appeared in a natural light. A stranger in her own household, she scarce dared to offer a return of the civilities extended to her; and thus her timidity was misinterpreted, and she was called haughty and disagreeable—grave offences, with which she did not dream she was charged. Hers was not a solitary instance. Let any of my lady friends, who have gone through the ordeal of an introduction to a family of new relations, and a new circle of acquaintances, ask themselves if they cannot remember many

hours of bitterness, when they felt themselves misinterpreted ; and would have given worlds for the sight of an old familiar face, or the tone of one in whose regard they felt secure. It is not the least trial in the first year of married life.

At such times, Marian would retreat to her own little room, and give vent to her excited feelings in a hearty “school-girl cry;” and although Louis soothed her gently when he first found her thus, he chided her on a second offence, and was even betrayed into harshness, when he found these scenes were of frequent repetition. He called it “childishness,” and said she must gain more self-control.

Poor little bride ! she often sobbed herself to sleep now, for Miss Margaret had also taken upon herself to give her a lecture occasionally, and Miss Musgrave’s looks were enough to chill her at any time. Yet the sisters thought they were doing it all for her good—she must be fashioned after their own model, to meet their unqualified approbation. The silver birch might be trained upward to the stiff formality of the poplar as well !

When they came to return the round of bridal visits, and to mingle in the festivities of the neighbourhood, it was still worse. Fresh from the gaiety and adulation of the most brilliant cirele of our land, she entered into the mirth and joyousness of the younger people without a scruple. She laughed and chatted with the young men, and they pronounced her charming ; the young ladies borrowed her capes and her dresses—she was becoming a favourite with them, and, surrounded by more congenial spirits, the natural gaiety and affability of her character were unrestrained. At first, Louis stood by, as he had done at Washington, and enjoyed the admiration which she excited ; but the difference in their ages, frequently commented on, intruded itself by degrees,

and he grew almost angry with Marian for the very childishness that had won him. It was well enough, perhaps, in Marian Cleveland; but Mrs. Musgrave must not bring upon herself the reputation of being a flirt. No one but himself—the wiseacre—would have dreamed of giving it to her.

There was a long consultation with Miss Caroline, one morning, and Marian sat alone in her boudoir, dreading instinctively its results. Miss Musgrave and Miss Margaret did not hesitate to complain to their brother, now, whenever she did anything that offended their ideas of propriety; and Marian knew that so long and so serious a conversation could be nothing but a rehearsal of some fearful misdeed on her part.

She held some work in her hand, but she was not thinking of it, nor of the bright spring sunshine that looked in from the garden, as if to comfort her. She had been married four months, now, and had already seen many

“Darling visions die;”

and began to ask herself if she was as happy as she had expected to be. A sure sign that people suspect all is not right, when they find leisure to ask such questions of themselves. “I should be happy—yes, I ought to be very happy—only somehow Miss Musgrave will spoil it all. I wonder they never found out at home I was such a very bad girl. I don’t think Louis would have discerned it, if he had not put on her spectacles. I wish they would let me go home and pay a visit, or ask mamma here, or let Etta come for a few weeks. July is a great while to wait before I see any of them! I wonder if they miss me?”—and then a deep sigh, that fairly startled her Canary upon its perch, so long, so deep was it—finished the sentence.

“Maple grove is very grand, to be sure; but then it’s nothing

to me, though it does belong to Louis." So Marian's thoughts ran on. "And the house, it is large and fine, and all that; but there's not a room in it that I should like to pass through alone after dark, except this; and I am expecting every day that Miss Musgrave will need it for a china-closet or store-room. I wonder what I *have* been doing now to displease her. Oh, I know; it must have been asking Annie Lane to drive out with me to-morrow. Of course, she wants the horses herself—she always does, when I want to go anywhere——"

And here the meditation was interrupted by Louis himself, who entered the room hastily, and with the air of a man who considers himself deeply aggrieved.

"Mrs. Musgrave," said he, abruptly—oh, where were the thousand pet names she had so loved? He had never called her Mrs. Musgrave when they were alone before.

Marian was in no mood to take fault-finding patiently just then, particularly as she felt it to be undeserved. She did not answer, when Louis told her that he entirely disapproved of her growing intimacy with Miss Lane, whom he considered a frivolous sentimental girl; and, moreover, he could not and would not allow *his* wife to exhibit herself, as she had done the evening before, in dancing the polka with George Lane—the young lieutenant now home on furlough. Her waltzing he had endured, for there were many ladies whose sense of decorum allowed them to sin against propriety in the like manner; but as for the polka, he had never liked it at Washington, and was utterly amazed, and pained, and *shocked*, to see her attempt to introduce it in this unsophisticated country town.

Marian attempted to reply, but Louis had now worked himself to a pitch of injured innocence that allowed of no extenuations.

And then she grew sulky, and finally a feeling of anger, more against his sister, than Louis, flashed from her beautiful eyes, and burned in her pulses. Miss Musgrave was at the bottom of all this, no doubt; but why did Louis suffer himself to be so blinded by her? Where was the confidence that had once existed between them—the unusual tenderness which had marked his love when she first came to find a home at Maple Grove?

“Home!” Marian echoed the word bitterly. And then an evil demon whispered a mad response to this injustice; and, as it flashed to her mind, she said, while Louis turned on his heel, evidently thinking her properly punished and subdued—

“A thousand thanks for your kind care, sir. But I beg to be allowed to ride and dance with whom I choose, unless Miss Musgrave will designate whom she *does* consider fit companions for me!”

Could he believe his own senses! Mr. Musgrave stood still in the library door, transfixed—like one of the marble busts which adorned it. Did those angry, wilful words come choking forth from the lips of his gentle wife, who had never even expostulated before? Could that be Marian, who stood before him so resolutely, with a flushed cheek and flashing eyes? What had wrought the transformation? How had he been so deceived in one he had considered the soul of gentleness and truth?

He turned without a word, and the library door fell to with a clang that rang along the halls in dreary echoes. It was the first time it had been closed between them.

Marian thought of this, and the sound came to her like an omen of future discord and estrangement. She was calmer now, and had leisure to tremble at her own daring, unwifely words. Her first impulse was to fly to him, to fall at his feet and entreat

pardon. But she hesitated, while her hand was on the door, and a colder, sterner feeling took possession of her. "He taunted me," she thought, bitterly. "It is he who should sue for pardon" — and then she sat down to her work again, though her hands trembled violently, and indulged in bitter reverie. She felt her heart grow colder and heavier as she sat there, and she wondered at the change which had filled it with wicked promptings. Alas, for Marian, that the good spirit was resisted in its first whispering; she had yielded herself one moment to a darker guide, and the chains of error were fast being riveted upon her.

Louis Musgrave buried his face in his hands, and sat for a long time without moving. Two miserable hearts were beating very near each other, and there was a veil between them for the first time. He too was prompted at first to explain, at least — he could not see that any apology was due from him; and then pride came and took the place of regret, and, in the guise of reason, taunted him with a foolish marriage.

"At your time of life," said the tempter, "when you might have married any lady you had chosen, to select an unformed, frivolous child, without intellectual sympathy! and, after you had raised her from comparative obscurity, and endowed her with your name and fortune, she revolts from your proper and lawful authority, and this is your reward. Suffer now, for you have brought it upon yourself; but do not sue for reconciliation—that is her part."

Even Miss Musgrave was satisfied with the cold dignity of Marian's manner, when they met at the dinner-table, and she congratulated herself on the timely rebuke administered by Louis at her suggestion. And Mr. Musgrave was startled at the change a few hours had wrought; for a wounded spirit had shadowed

that sunny face with the thoughtfulness of a sorrowing womanhood. Marian was, in truth, a child no longer; and “woe to him by whom the offence came.”

CHAPTER IV.

Experience, like a pale musician, holds
A dulcimer of patience in his hand;
Whence harmonies we cannot understand,
Of God's will in his worlds, the strain unfolds,
In sad, perplexed minors.

MISS BARRETT.



UNE warmth and brightness had come to the grounds of Maple Grove, covering the trees with a cloud of fresh foliage, and waking to life a thousand lovely flowers beneath their shade.

Rose trees bent to the earth with their wealth of glowing blossoms, and clumps of the flowering almond and sweet syringa sent forth delicate perfumes to mingle with the breath of the eglantine. Birds sang in their leafy coverts, and butterflies were flitting from spray to spray;—heavy, indeed, must be the heart that could not be happy amid these influences; yet the rightful mistress of this stately home longed to exchange it for a little cottage far away, where a few spring blossoms were blooming brightly in the humble garden walks. She sat by the low, French window, thrown open now to the breeze and the sunshine, and wondered where her light-heartedness, which had made spring the loveliest season of the year, had flown. Her face was far paler now than when we first met her, and the joyous smile which had then “hidden in her eyes,” was gone with the light heart.

She had commenced to think, to reason, to *suffer*, now. Existence was no longer the illusion it had once been : it had assumed a meaning and a purpose. She had been driven to books, as the companions of the many solitary hours she had passed of late, and they had taught her, and her own restlessness and unhappiness had taught her, that there was an error in her life that had ruined all her peace. At times she was gay, gayer than ever ; a mad, reckless volatility of word and action, that startled Louis, and offended his sisters. And then days would pass, with but ordinary civility interchanged between that divided household, and Marian spent them in bitter weeping and self-upbraiding, in her own little room.

The library door had never been unclosed since the day of their first strife ; it was not the only time, alas, that bitter words had been spoken ! Marian often sat near it for hours, listening to every movement from the other side, and longing to watch Louis, as of old, at his studies there. But he was cold and proud, and she had watched every glance of those eyes too long not to see it, and this repelled her when confession and repentance struggled for utterance.

She was thinking over all these things that bright morning, and wondering if she should ever be happy again. But she was not alone now, for her old friend, Mrs. Lawton, was watching her with anxious, pitying gaze, and tears that came unbidden, as she thought of the change a few months had wrought.

They had not spoken of it during Mrs. Lawton's brief and unexpected visit ; for Marian's pride revolted at the idea of confiding to another — to Laura more than *all others* — her wrongs and her errors. But this morning, Laura could no longer forbear to probe the wound which she felt was undermining health and

spirit, and she did it delicately and tenderly. And then what a relief it was to Marian to tell all! How she had been misunderstood, and humbled, and treated like a child. That Miss Musgrave had prejudiced Louis, and he would not ask an explanation or receive it, but only blamed her; and for the very things he had once praised and encouraged. It was very hard! And then she was lonely, for Louis could not always be with her; and the friends which Miss Musgrave and he had selected for her, were sober, married ladies, who talked about housekeeping and managing children, and all that. How could she be interested in them?

Well, she had chosen some acquaintances for herself, and Miss Musgrave treated them rudely, and Louis had chided her. Then she had rebelled, and had spoken angrily to Louis, and about his sisters, too; and she had resolved to be governed by them no longer. "Oh, if I had never done so!" murmured the conscience-stricken little wife.

"After that," she continued, "I danced with George Lane more than ever; but Louis did not attempt to interfere; we just let each other all alone—that is, Miss Musgrave and Louis never speak to me when they can help it. Miss Margaret is kinder; but then she is always busy helping some poor or sick person, and sometimes she is gone for whole weeks. Then it is dreadful here. If Louis would only scold me, I could bear it better. But no; he is so polite and grave, and looks at me so coldly; and I never saw any thing but love in those eyes till we came here."

What could Laura say to comfort the despairing little creature, who was so desolate amid all this luxury and beauty? She saw there was fault on both sides; and, as the memory of her short married life arose, she thanked God there was naught like

this to cloud it. Oh, how her spirit yearned then, as it often did, for the beautiful companionship and sympathy she had then known, and she trembled lest Marian had lost it too, but in a living death.

"I am going to-night, Marian," she said; "and I feel as if Providence had sent me hither to be a mediator between you. What has been the extent of your fault, you alone can tell; Mr. Musgrave must answer to his own heart. Perhaps he, too, has longed in secret for the termination of this unnatural coldness. Is not your duty before you, as a wife, to confess your errors, even though pride says no—and strive henceforth to avoid what you know displeases him, and to win back, even at the sacrifice of your own will and pleasure, his confidence and esteem? Miss Musgrave has doubtless been acting right in her own eyes; but your cheerful and patient submission to her whims and caprices cannot fail to win her at last. She is much older than you, recollect, and has not usurped authority, but retained it. When you have shown yourself a reasonable, unselfish, true-hearted woman, your part will have been accomplished; and you must trust to a higher power that all will be well."

Poor Marian! It was a hard task set before her; and at first there was little encouragement. On the evening of Mrs. Lawton's departure, she indulged herself with giving way to loneliness she now felt more keenly for the pleasant companionship of the last few days; and as Louis passed near her window as night came on, he saw her sitting there with her arms about Neptune's neck, crying most bitterly. It was a sad picture, truly, that loving, affectionate heart, clinging to a dog in very loneliness, and the faithful creature looking up into her face with almost human sympathy. Once it would have moved Louis; but now he only

uttered a “pshaw,” as he reproached himself with having married not only a child, but a *baby*. His unusual sternness checked the confession Marian had nerved herself to make; and, resolve as she would, she could not utter it when the time had once passed.

I suppose my younger and more romantic readers think it would have been much better if Louis had gone in when he saw her looking sad, and, of his own accord, taken her in his arms and comforted her, and they had “made up,” as the children say, and been happy for ever after.

Alas! many influences sway our hearts besides the spirit of peace, and error must work out its own punishment.

Marian was not daunted when her overtures of good-will to Miss Musgrave were at first coldly received; for she knew Laura had spoken the truth, and she had resolved to do rightly, come what would. Mrs. Lawton often wrote to her, too, words of encouragement and hope, that buoyed up her fainting spirit when she was ready to despond, and she had won a reconciliation with her own heart at least, and had now no self-upbraidings to add to her sorrow. She was surprised to find what genuine happiness there was in the mere fulfilment of daily duty and self-conquest; and she could but wonder at the ease with which she gave up her long-promised visit home, in July, when some business required Mr. Musgrave’s presence in a different direction.

Indeed, she felt quite rewarded for it by the kind look which Louis gave her when she said, pleasantly—“I suppose I must make myself contented until September, then.” And she was almost sure he would have said, “Dear child!” and kissed her as of old, if Miss Musgrave had not come into the room just then.

To tell the truth, Louis had expected a burst of sobs and lamentations, for he well knew how she had counted the days

and hours, as they slipped tardily by, and had looked forward with eager anticipation to her first visit. Moreover, he was not insensible to the change which the last few weeks had wrought; but perhaps "patience had not had her perfect work;" for while his heart warmed toward her, his sister's entrance put all these feelings to flight.

And now Louis was gone, and Miss Margaret was confined to the sofa with a sprained ankle; and at meal times, and many hours besides, Marian was left alone with the awful Miss Musgrave. She did not fly to her room as she had done the instant dinner was over, but interested herself in that lady's occupations, and proffered her assistance so timidly, yet so earnestly, and laughed so heartily at her many mistakes, and received their correction with so much sweetness, that before Miss Musgrave knew it, she watched for the graceful little form to come flitting into the room, and really felt lonely if Marian sat by herself to read or write. Miss Margaret, too, became loud in her praise. She had never found leisure before to study the character of our little heroine aright, and in many things she found they had wronged her. "She is such a careful nurse," said Miss Margaret, as the weeks went by. "And helped me about those sweetmeats this morning as well as you could have done," chimed in her sister. "And reads aloud with such taste and expression," continued the invalid. "I don't think she has seen Anna Lane for a fortnight, or asked for the horses once when I happened to want them since Louis has been gone. Well, she's a dear little thing, after all."

Marian's heart would have beat more lightly (if that were possible) could she have heard this; but she was too deeply absorbed in a letter just at that moment to heed even her own praises. It

was from Louis, and announced his speedy return. Besides this good news in itself—for she had begun to long for his return, forgetful of past unhappiness—the formal “My dear wife,” he had hitherto used, was exchanged for “My bird,” as in those days of happiness, before he had a right to address her by the first title. And then the signature was as affectionate as her heart could desire. There was no allusion to their past estrangement, it is true, but Marian had almost forgotten that.

“Is n’t three days a long time to wait, Miss Margaret?” she said, suddenly, that evening.

The sisters smiled to each other, as if to say, “How she loves him!” and Miss Margaret answered, gently—

“Why not call me *sister*, Marian?”

“May I? Oh, thank you!” and she kissed them both heartily as she bade them good-night; though she could but confess that she liked Miss Margaret much the best.

How pleasant her room looked, as she entered it! A bright harvest moon silvered the dark and heavy furniture, and “slept on the inner floor.” She wondered she had ever thought it gloomy, and how it had happened that she should have been so unhappy in her new home, where every one was so kind to her. And then a gush of thankfulness filled her heart, and she knelt, with the moonlight surrounding her like a halo, and, with hands clasped, prayed most fervently, giving thanks for the kind counsel of a faithful friend, and for the strength that had supported her in her self-conquest.

Oh! how beautiful every thing seemed as she looked forth again upon the night! for her spirit was in harmony with itself, the repose of earth, and with its Creator. She had learned at last the beautiful lesson of Holy Writ, that “tribula-

tion worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience HOPE."

She sat there for a long time, by the low window seat, thinking every moment she would go to rest; but at last she forgot her resolution; for her head dropped upon the window-ledge, and she slept.

Ah, what a dream of joy! Louis had returned, she thought, and all was explained, and forgiven, and forgotten. He had taken her to his heart again, and she felt his kisses upon her forehead; and there came something like a pang lest she should wake too soon. No; she could not wake too soon; for she found the dream reality. Louis bent over her as she unclosed her eyes, and before she could realize his blessed presence, his arms were about her, and she felt the strong throbbing of his heart.

Marian could not have spoken if life — nay, more, if love — had demanded it; but she laid her head upon his breast, and looked up into his eyes with a gaze so intense, so full of hope and confidence, that no words were needed.

Louis told Laura, herself, long afterwards, when he found to whom he was indebted for that hour of happiness, the workings of his heart in that absence. How he had traced back each incident of his married life, till he saw how hastily and unkindly he had acted. That he had allowed the opinions of others to have an undue influence over him, instead of judging Marian's actions by the knowledge of her character which he alone possessed. Then came remorse for his long coldness, and tenderness when he thought of her gentle endeavours to please them all for the past few weeks; and at last a yearning to see her, that had brought him home ere he was expected, to hear her praises from his sisters, and to waken her with a kiss of reconciliation.

How fully was Marian rewarded for its delay, by the happiness of the journey which they made together to the scenes of their early acquaintance, and how often she congratulated herself that her mother had never been a witness or a confidant of her early unhappiness; an experience which she had ceased to regret, for it had subdued her gayety to cheerfulness, and her thoughtlessness had given place to an unselfish care for the happiness of others.

None but Mrs. Lawton ever knew how nearly shipwrecked had been the happiness of the now united family at Maple Grove; and when she came among them, a favourite and warmly welcomed visitor, and saw how this union was daily cemented by mutual acts of forbearance and consideration, she could but be grateful that, while domestic happiness had been denied to her, she had aided to secure it to one so well-beloved as her friend, Marian.

B L I N D.

PART I.

The hand of the operator wavered — the instrument glanced aside —
in a moment she was blind for life.—MS.

BLIND, said you? Blind for life?
'Tis but a jest — no — no — it cannot be
That I no more the blessed light may see!
Oh, what a fearful strife
Of horrid thought is raging in my mind:
I did not hear aright — "for ever blind!"

Mother, you would not speak
Aught but the truth to me, your stricken child;
Tell me I do but dream; my brain is wild,
And yet my heart is weak.
Oh, mother, fold me in a close embrace,
Bend down to me that dear, that gentle face.

I cannot hear your voice!
Speak louder, mother. Speak to me, and say
This frightful dream will quickly pass away.
Have I no hope, no choice?
O Heaven, with light, has sound, too, from me fled?
Call, shout aloud, as if to wake the dead.

Thank God ! I hear you now.
 I hear the beating of your troubled heart,
 With every woe of mine it has a part ;
 Upon my upturned brow
 The hot tears fall, from those dear eyes, for me.
 Once more, oh ! is it true I may not see ?

This silence chills my blood.
 Had you one word of comfort, all my fears
 Were quickly banished — faster still the tears,
 A bitter, burning flood,
 Fall on my face, and now one trembling word
 Confirms the dreadful truth my ears have heard.

Why weep you ? I am calm.
 My wan lip quivers not, my heart is still.
 My swollen temples — see, they do not thrill !
 That word was as a charm.
 Tell me the worst ; all, all I now can bear.
 I have a fearful strength — that of despair.

What is it to be blind ?
 To be shut out for ever from the skies —
 To see no more the “light of loving eyes” —
 And, as years pass, to find
 My lot unvaried by one passing gleam
 Of the bright woodland, or the flashing stream.

To feel the breath of Spring,
Yet not to view one of the tiny flowers
That come from out the earth with her soft showers;
To hear the bright birds sing,
And feel, while listening to their joyous strain,
My heart can ne'er know happiness again!

Then in the solemn night
To lie alone, while all anear me sleep,
And fancy fearful forms about me creep.
Starting in wild affright,
To know, if true, I could not have the power
To ward off danger in that lonely hour.

And, as my breath came thick,
To feel the hideous darkness round me press,
Adding new terror to my loneliness;
While every pulse leapt quick
To clutch and grasp at the black, stifling air,
Then sink in stupor from my wild despair.

It comes upon me now!
I cannot breathe, my heart grows sick and chill;
Oh, mother, are your arms about me still—
Still o'er me do you bow?
And yet I care not, better all alone,
No one to heed my weakness should I moan.

Again ! I will not live.
Death is no worse than this eternal night—
Those resting in the grave heed not the light !
Small comfort can *ye* give.
Yes, Death is welcome as my only friend ;
In the calm grave my sorrows will have end.

Talk not to me of hope !
Have you not told me it is all in vain —
That while I live I may not see again ?
That earth, and the broad scope
Of the blue heaven — that all things glad and free
Henceforth are hidden — tell of hope to me ?

It is not hard to lie
Calmly and silently in that long sleep ;
No fear can wake me from that slumber deep .
So, mother — let me die ;
I shall be happier in the gentle rest,
Than living with this grief to fill my breast.

P A R T II.

“God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.”

Thank God, that yet I live.
In tender mercy, heeding not the prayer
I boldly uttered, in my first despair,
 He would not rashly give
The punishment an erring spirit braved.
From sudden death, in kindness I was saved.

It was a fearful thought
That this fair earth had not one pleasure left.
I was at once of sight and hope bereft.

My soul was not yet taught
To bow submissive to the sudden stroke;
Its crushing weight my heart had well-nigh broke.

Words are not that can tell
The horrid thoughts that burned upon my brain—
That came and went with madness still the same—
 A black and icy spell
That froze my life-blood, stopped my fluttering breath,
Was laid upon me—even “*life in death.*”

Long weary months crept by,
And I refused all comfort; turned aside,
Wishing that in my weakness I had died.

I uttered no reply,
But without ceasing wept, and moaned, and prayed
The hand of death no longer might be stayed.

I shunned the gaze of all.
I knew that pity dwelt in every look.
Pity e'en then my proud breast could not brook.

Though darkness as a pall
Circled me round, each mournful eye *I felt*,
That for a moment on my features dwelt.

You, dearest mother, know
I shrank in sullenness from your caress.
Even *your* kisses added to distress,
For burning tears would flow
As you bent o'er me, whispering "Be calm,
He who hath wounded holds for thee a balm."

He did not seem a friend.
I deemed in wrath the sudden blow was sent
From a strong arm that never might relent.

That pain alone would end
With life; for, mother, then it seemed to me,
That long, and dreamless, would death's slumber be.

That blessed illness came.
 My weakened pulse now bounded wild and strong,
 While soon a raging fever burned along
 My worn, exhausted frame.
 And for the time all knowledge passed away.
 It mattered not that hidden was the day.

The odour of sweet flowers
 Came stealing through the casement when I woke ;
 When the wild fever-spell at last was broke.
 And yet for many hours
 I laid in dreamy stillness, till your tone
 Called back the life that seemed for ever flown.

You, mother, knelt in prayer.
 While one dear hand was resting on my head,
 With sobbing voice, how fervently you plead
 For a strong heart, to bear
 The parting which you feared — “Or, if she live,
 Comfort, oh, Father ! to the stricken give.

“Take from her wandering mind
 The heavy load which it so long hath borne,
 Which even unto death her frame hath worn.

Let her in mercy find
*That though the Earth she may no longer see,
 Her spirit still can look to Heaven and Thee.”*

A low sob from me stole.
A moment more — your arms about me wound —
My head upon your breast a pillow found.

And through my weary soul
A holy calm came stealing from on high.
Your prayer was answered — I was not to die.

Then when the bell's faint chime
Came floating gently on the burdened air,
My heart went up to God in fervent prayer.

And, mother, from that time
My wild thoughts left me — hope returned once more —
I felt that happiness was yet in store.

Daily new strength was given.
For the first time, since darkness on me fell,
I passed with more of joy than words can tell

Under the free blue Heaven.
I bathed my brow in the cool, gushing spring —
How much of life those bright drops seemed to bring.

I crushed the dewy leaves
Of the pale violets, and drank their breath —
Though I had heard that at each floweret's death

A sister blossom grieves.
I did not care to see their glorious hues,
Fearing the richer *perfume* I might lose.

Then in the dim old wood
I laid me down beneath a bending tree,
And dreamed, dear mother, waking dreams of thee.

I thought how just and good
The power that had so gently sealed mine eyes,
Yet bade new pleasures and new hopes arise.

For now in truth I find
MY FATHER all his promises hath kept;
He comforts those who have in sadness wept.

“Eyes to the blind”
Thou art, O God! Earth I no longer see,
Yet trustfully my spirit looks to thee.

THE END.

Door Mo mīl en ik hoopt
dat jullie & de anderen goed van mij
zullen antwoorden omdat dat bestaat heel
veel goed teken voor mij. En dan is
niet alles alleen alleen te hooch te hopen dat
men goed van ons ontvangt want dat is niet

het geval want dat is niet zo
welig dat wij alleen dat kunnen. Want
wij zijn ook welig dat wij alleen dat kunnen. Want
wij zijn ook welig dat wij alleen dat kunnen. Want
wij zijn ook welig dat wij alleen dat kunnen.

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